POETS AND PILGRIMS

Katherine Brégy, Litt. D.

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POETS AND PILGRIMS

CHAUCER AND THE BIRDS

From the First Page of Chaucer's Works, Kelmscott Edition

POETS *and* PILGRIMS

FROM GEOFFREY CHAUCER TO PAUL CLAUDEL

BY

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TO THE MEMORY OF

"A Very Perfect, Gentle Knight,"

MY FATHER,

F. AMÉDÉÉ BRÉGY

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POETS AND PILGRIMS

THE INCLUSIVENESS OF CHAUCER

IT IS in the spring or early summer that Chaucer should be read—or else, perhaps, upon New Year's Day. For he is the poet of perpetual youth, of new beginnings, of vernal love and fresh enthusiasms. His symbol of joy, repeated again and again, is the cock crowing lusty welcome to the dawn. He sees and sings about the peculiar brightness of March sunshine. He starts off his Canterbury Pilgrims in April, the month of new-washed earth, when the

> Smalé fowelés maken melodye,
> That slepen all the nyght with open eye

and folk feel the prick of the open roads in their heel. In the *Romaunt of the Rose* he declares "hard is the heart that loveth naught in May," that month of mirth, when his thrice-beloved birds bring everywhere their "blesful sweté song pitous." And in his *Parlement of Foules* he paints a landscape which

to our northern imaginations must forever conjure up June, drenched with color, music, activity; leaves shining emerald-like, the smooth garden beside the river starred with flowers of white, blue, yellow and red, its cold well-streams full of silver-bright fish, the birds still singing on every branch "with voys of angel," the little coneys scurrying off to their play, the great buck, the hart and hind, never forgetting the

Squerels and bestés smale of gentil kynde.

To some natures, youth is an explosive or a brittle loveliness, but to Geoffrey Chaucer it was so robust that he carried it all through his sixty years. To be sure, the later poems are more realistic, more wistful: they have learned the weight of the empty purse—the sad wisdom which makes its guess that "no man is al trewe." . . . But they are still incorrigibly interested in the world and everything in it. They never forget what it has meant to be young. If they have grown up at all, it is simply that they have acquired that tender and humorous *inclusiveness* which never comes until youth is mellowed by the bitter-sweet of experience.

It was Chaucer's gain, no doubt, to have lived when the modern world was itself young and rather boisterous and very much alive—in that fourteenth century which was for his beloved England prac-

tically what the teeming thirteenth had been for nations further south—the seed-bursting of modern Christendom, the *vita nuova,* with all its unplumbed possibilities for better and for worse. But superficially, at least, it is our loss. Because from the very fact that Chaucer came as a "morning star," he came before his nation was quite awake. He came before its language, its institutions, its literary conventions, were steadfast; his own work was, in fact, to play an enormous part in stabilizing them for future centuries. Consequently, he himself must forever be read either in translation or with the help of a glossary. And there never was a writer to whom the letter of criticism applied less, nor for whom the spirit of understanding was needed more. There never was a poet who would have been more amused to find himself the admired subject of a seminar course! He was hilariously human, even in his most devout and most romantic moments, so that in the last analysis he must be judged by human even more than literary standards. And all the immense labors of the Chaucer Society, and of such scholars as Dr. Furnivall and Professor Ten Brink, of Skeat and Pollard and the American Professor Lounsbury—work that is not merely valuable, but invaluable—may best be thought of as a ladder leaning up against the wall of Chaucer's garden. From the height of this ladder newer students may

gaze across the top, and all in a moment drink in illumination.

For example, there is Professor Kittredge (of Harvard), whose vivacious and sympathetic lectures * point out the similarity between the fourteenth century and our own. As no small part of the poet's peculiar virtue of *inclusiveness* was chargeable to his age—with another large part attributable to the circumstances of his life—the point is worth following up. "It was an age of intense activity—a singularly 'modern' time," says this suggestive volume. "One is tempted to assert that all the problems which vex the world today, either sprang into existence or made themselves especially troublesome in the sixty years of Chaucer's life. . . . Labor gave trouble in a dozen ways. The Black Death cut down the supply of farm hands throughout the country. Those who were left, once little better than slaves, asserted themselves in a manner that terrified vested interests and prompted futile legislation." Also, as he points out, industrial problems had been made doubly acute in Edward III's time by immigration; there were the changes brought into practices of war by the waning of chivalry—and the "Eastern Questions"—a quite excited interest in learning and the spread of education—and, finally, the fact that "anarchy borrowed the language of democracy" in challenging a thousand accepted rights of human government,

* *Chaucer and His Poetry*, by George Lyman Kittredge.

and both the spiritual and political prestige of the Church. "It was a scrambling and unquiet time, when nobody was at rest but the dead. In a word, it was a good time to live in, and so Chaucer found it. But . . . it differed from our own in one regard: the man of intellect read everything he could lay his hands on; he did not confine his interests to his specialty, even if he had one." And with this crowded world Chaucer, whose "specialty was mankind," rubbed elbows early and late, working, bearing arms, holding public office, writing poems (and reading them), knowing *everybody*—high and low, hierarch and heretic, romancer, tradesman, astrologer—proving all things, but, as it seems, holding fast to that which was good.

The poet's biography must next come in for a share of benediction, since it so admirably developed, instead of deflecting or repressing, his native gifts. Indeed, that rather brief and much interrupted life story—a balance of thought and action, learning and first-hand creativeness, familiarity with the Court and friendliness with the people, pleasure and adversity—was in every way contrived to develop a universal genius like his own; or else, it may have been his universal genius which made it so! The date upon which most scholars agree for Chaucer's birth was the year 1340, and the place London. In any case, Geoffrey was the son of a London vintner of French descent—and as early as

1357 he was in the service of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster, a daughter-in-law of the reigning sovereign, Edward III. Two years later he went to war in France, where he was taken prisoner; but being amicably ransomed by royal favor, he returned to England and entered the King's own service.

It is distinctly pleasant to read of Edward granting, in 1367, a yearly pension of twenty marks to this *dilectus valettus noster;* and from this post of royal valet or yeoman, the young Chaucer was duly raised to the state of esquire, and launched upon the busy diplomatic career for which he was so happily suited. His wife, Philippa, was already one of the Queen's "damoiselles"; and if one accepts the legend that this Philippa was a daughter of Sir Payne Roet, and sister of that adventurous Katherine Roet who eventually became third wife to John of Gaunt, it explains several incidents of princely favor (and the lack of it) through his career. In any case, Chaucer's first poetic work on record was that *Book of the Duchesse,* which he wrote with even more than a courtier's grace upon the death of John of Gaunt's first wife, the Duchess Blanche, in 1369.

Three years later he seems to have performed a State commission to Genoa so satisfactorily that the King granted him the amiable additional pension of "a pitcher of wine daily." He was often abroad on diplomatic business after that—to France, to Flanders, to Italy. Sometimes it was to arrange peace,

sometimes to secure trading posts; after his patron, Edward, had died, it was to discuss the marriage of young Richard II. But one suspects that these voyages meant much for literature also, and one of them probably included a meeting with Petrarch. At home, Chaucer seems (possibly because of John of Gaunt's continued friendship) to have been a rather constant office-holder; now as controller of the custom and subsidy of wools, or of the petty customs of wine; again, as official forester of North Petherton Park and clerk of the King's Works at Westminster and Windsor; last of all, as commissioner for repairs along the Thames embankment between Greenwich and Woolwich. And instead of playing "absentee landlord," it would have been quite true to form for the genial fourteenth-century poet to take real interest in these rather prosaic employments.

Throughout those younger years, it seems obvious enough that Chaucer could have had small time for poetry; although they must have included, in addition to the *Duchesse,* the translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose,* and all the works now ascribed to his French period. But after his last foreign mission—it was to Italy in 1378—he produced continuously for fifteen or twenty years. He produced, for instance, the great tragedy of *Troilus,* and all the works of Italian influence. Then, in the fullness of his genius and experience, he conceived the plan of

the *Canterbury Tales,* created that immortal and inimitable *dramatis personæ,* and gathered from new treasures and old his materials for the peerless whole.

Not that he was a recluse during those literary years—Geoffrey Chaucer was never a recluse! In 1385 he was Justice of the Peace for Kent, and the next year he was elected to Parliament from the same county—upon which no one seems to have laid excessive stress in those days. It is thought that Dame Chaucer may have died about 1387 (perhaps the very year the *Tales* were begun in earnest), and it is certain that from this time he walked more thorny ways than had been his wont. John of Gaunt, thanks to his heterodox views and his futile habit of kingdom hunting, was no longer a name to conjure with; and while there is not a shred of evidence connecting Chaucer with these vagaries, he naturally fell with his royal patron. In 1398 the poet was sued for debt—and probably about the same time, since he was always capable of seeing the humor of his misfortunes, he wrote that ironic little *Compleynt to His Purse.* When Henry IV became King, he was besought to grant Chaucer a new pension; and while he acceded to this after the usual delays, the poet-philosopher, the lover and server of his fellow-men, was soon to pass beyond its need. In the little tenement he had recently leased in the garden of St. Mary's, Westminster—on the very site now covered by Henry VII's chapel

—Geoffrey Chaucer died, on October 25, 1400. He was buried in the Abbey Church close by—where, sleeping quietly in that south transept, he was to leaven forevermore the Poets' Corner of his fatherland.

It was suggested a while ago that if one part of Chaucer's warm inclusiveness might be attributed to his century, another slice must be borrowed from the versatile circumstances of his life. But by far the lion's share must be charged always to the man's own heart. Now inclusiveness can never be described as a natural English virtue—one is not sure that it is wholly a natural virtue at all. But Chaucer was inalienably *simpatico* in the broadest possible sense. He had tolerance, curiosity, patience, even, for the most amazing variety of people. The rain of his tears falls upon the just and the unjust, if only they are in trouble: and (far more difficult to most human beings!) the sunshine of his laughter dances across the evil and the good with an impartiality almost scandalous to smaller and straighter hearts. It is manifestly impossible here, and it would surely be found superfluous, to give any exhaustive summary of Geoffrey Chaucer's works, extending, as they do, all the way from highly romantic prayers to the Most Blessed Virgin, to praises for the unhappy ladies whom he describes as "saints of cupid." But a little glimpse into the *Canterbury Tales* is sufficient to prove the point. To be sure, the *Tales*

are a storehouse: but even so, they are shorter than most of the classics of literature—or than many works not classics at all. They are not so long as the *Divina Commedia,* with which, in spite of all contrariness of aim, they share at least the flaming faith and hope of medievalism. Nor are they within miles so long as the *Comédie Humaine,* with which they share that comprehensive and wistful charity, that universal brotherhood, which is perhaps the highest note of modernity.

Look just at the ordering of human beings in that priceless *Prologue*—which has been called, for wealth of its character-painting, the first novel in English literature. Now Chaucer, standing himself midway between the Court and the common people —a perfect example of the inspired bourgeoisie, to whom all things are possible—was aristocrat enough to head off his portraits with the Knight: *a verray parfit, gentil Knyght,* too. This was the medieval model of a gentleman, before the word fell upon evil days: a worthy man, lover of chivalry, truth, honor, courtesy, freedom, who had fought bravely in Christian and pagan lands, and had returned "with port as meeke as is a mayde," eager for his pilgrimage to St. Thomas' shrine. Next comes his son, the Squire, a rather dashing and amorous young person of twenty years—the perpetual matinée idol, the "great lover"—but none the less obedient in carving at table before his worthy father. With

them was a single serving man, the Yeoman all in green, with bow and arrows. And then comes one of the most exquisite of all Chaucer's creations, the Prioress, Madame Eglentyne. There is all the verisimilitude of a first-hand portrait in this dignified young daughter of the Church, with her entourage of a second nun, three priests—and two little hounds! Madame Eglentyne stands midway between the usual conception of a Mother Prioress, a *grande dame* and a *précieuse*. She is patently well born, well bred, well dressed: her extreme cleanliness, her daintiness at table, the mild extravagrance of feeding her beloved little dogs on roast flesh and white bread, and the sensitiveness which must weep to see a mouse caught in a trap, all stand out conspicuously. As a woman she is always with us—gentle, gracious, stately, a little scrupulous, a little insistent upon her own dignity, but inherently the upholder of the world's ideals. As a nun, she is not the modern, democratic ideal. She was the religious of a century which needed models not merely of poverty and humility, but of compassion, delicate chastity, and the graces of a growing civilization. Even so Chaucer paints her, summing up with the comment that "Al was conscïence and tendré herte": and while the sometimes rough story-telling was not edited for her ears, one notices that even the hilarious host, Harry Bailly, grows courtly in speaking to her.

And over against this spiritual, sensitive woman is set her inevitable foil, the Wife of Bath. Ruddy of face, gaudily dressed, humorous and indelicate of speech, a capable business woman used to having her own way, she, too, is as true as possible. She will give generously to any cause, if only she may have first place in giving. She revels in pilgrimages, because they give opportunity for travel and merry company. She believes that all happy men are ruled by their wives: and she ought to know—for like her prototype in Samaria, she has had five husbands by Churchly rite, a few others by less orthodox count, and she now frankly admits her readiness to consider a new alliance! But through all her coarseness and quick temper and licentiousness, there is a terrible vitality in the Wife of Bath. She can thank God for all that she has known of life—and somewhere underneath the thorns, the germ of Faith still lives in her headstrong, hot-blooded heart.

Almost more dramatic than that between Alisoun and Madame Eglentyne, is Chaucer's contrast of the corrupt Pardoner and the holy Parson of a Town. This was perhaps the ultimate test of his inclusiveness; for while many a man may divide his friendship between wise virgins and foolish wives (a little vulgarity being, in fact, one of the last blemishes men usually discover in a woman), it is almost inconceivable to look with equal eye upon the good and the evil Churchman. And Chaucer does not

look with equal eye. He is humorously tolerant toward the begging Friar, who is rather a bounder, too—and toward his "manly" Monk, who inclines toward horses, hunting and modernism. They have simply missed their vocations. But he does not love the yellow-haired, eloquent, cynical Pardoner—in whom one cannot help seeing a very outrider and incitement to the coming "Reformation." To the humble, hardworked Parson, on the other hand, a *shepherd and no mercenary* to his scattered flock, Chaucer's art is on its knees. This Parson, in fact, inspires many of the noblest lines in the whole Prologue—one cannot resist quoting the immortal summing-up of every true priest, before and since, that "firste he wroghte and afterward he taughte" . . . And this reverent, intimate study of the humble, devout and scholarly medieval Pastor, together with the exhaustive treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins assigned as his tale (and borrowed, by the by, from Frère Lorens' *Somme de Vices et de Vertues*), ought to stand as stanch evidence of Chaucer's hold upon orthodox Catholicism in an age when many were led awry.

In another sense, the Pardoner is also an evidence of his creator's orthodoxy. For here one sees a real abuse of the Church handled frankly, humanly—not as it must have seemed to an outraged contemporary Catholic moralist, but as it would certainly have seemed to a genially scornful contempo-

rary Catholic poet. The Pardoner is a venal hypocrite, and worse; a trafficker in indulgences, absolutions and spurious relics; but withal an actor of no mean parts, whose tale of Death and the Three Robbers is as stirring a sermon-story as one cares to hear. And there is just one spark of sincerity left in the man, which may some day save his soul alive. It flames up in that curious, half-vaunting confession of his own corruption before all the fellow-pilgrims—and in his sudden, pitiful prayer that Christ may give *His* pardon to them all—*For that is best; I wol you not deceyve!*

Taken for all in all, it is a brave mustering of humanity gathered by Harry Bailly's board at the old Tabard Inn; scarcely a type or symbol of life is missing—but they are much more than types or symbols. Everyone recognizes the scholarly, threadbare, unworldly Clerk of Oxford, who prays for the good friends who buy his precious rows of books —and the boisterous, garrulous, masterful innkeeper or "Host"—and the worthy Merchant, so sadly disenchanted with his recent marriage—the Sergeant at Law, who loves to be thought busier than he is—the Doctor of Physic, whose "studie was but litel on the Bible"—the hard-fisted, coarse-mouthed Shipman —the Cook, an important person liable to get drunk —the Plowman (brother of the Parson), who is all that a laborer should be—the wily Miller, who is all that a laborer should not be—and, finally, the

subtly submerged Poet himself, very quiet, seemingly "short" of wit, with downcast eyes which see everything and know too well what is in the heart of man.

Chaucer does not even forget the inevitable antipathies of his group: the wordy battle between Miller and Reve or Summoner and Friar, the half-disguised hostility of the Oxford Clerk and the Wife of Bath, the nearly violent altercation between Harry Bailly and the Pardoner. And one conflict, utterly in character, must be read almost wholly between the lines. The Shipman has just told a ribald, rather anti-clerical story, bound to jar upon the ears of the holy Parson and the Prioress—when it happens that she herself is the next one called upon for a tale. Madame Eglentyne accedes gladly; and without comment on what has gone before, she breaks first into a prayer to Christ's Mother, the *white lily flower* of virginity, and then into the exquisite legend of the little boy martyred by the Jews for singing her praises. Very guilelessly she tells the guileless story, and the pilgrims are spellbound into silence. Then, having casual cause to mention an abbot, she remarks sweetly that he was a *holy man*—"as all monks are, or ought to be." . . . It is really one of the finest rebukes in literature.

Was Goeffrey Chaucer *too inclusive,* one sometimes wonders? Did his all-understanding, all-pardoning art betray him sometimes into a very

excess of tolerance toward sin as well as sinner? He himself seems to have thought so in the later years; and in his little leave-taking he begs not only the reader's prayers for his soul, but also God's pardon for his earlier translations of *worldly vanities,* for "many a song and many a leccherous lay," and even for some of his Tales of Canterbury. Indeed in his excess of zeal the poet seems to regret all his work not devotional or ascetical in character! Naturally, no one will be found to share this pious regret—nor should it be construed as more than a temporary reaction in Chaucer. He was not made to grieve over the sins and sorrows of fallen man, but to rejoice that, even fallen, his life was still so brave and big in possibilities. That is why Aubrey de Vere found him a symbol of all the scarcely-comprehended versatility of the *Moyen Age.* "The Middle Ages were cheerful ages," he insisted, "and if their great Italian representative, Dante, was the most spiritual of poets, Chaucer, their great English representative, was the most mirthful and human-hearted."

Dryden was not one of the most inspired of Chaucer's critics, for he could not wholly escape the singular eighteenth-century condescension toward its predecessors, but he found the perfect word for the Canterbury Pilgrims. Perhaps the poet rather than the critic in him was speaking when he said simply: "Here is God's plenty." In these men and women

one sees evil and good not blended so much as mixed; precisely as in God's great world the wheat and the tares grow up together for the final harvesting. His Pilgrims are humanity. They are as various as humanity, as vital, as perfect and as perverse. The one bond of union is that common goal, Canterbury—

The hooly, blisful martir for to seke . . .

The shrine of St. Thomas is to be their testing. There, at Canterbury, it shall be proved who has come for curiosity, who for adventure, who for fear, who for love. In a sense, it is to be their final judgment; and either from accident or from design, Chaucer leaves his Pilgrims this side of that awesome goal. He leaves them *en route*—to Eternity.

LODGE AND HIS "ROSALYNDE"

(A SHAKESPEAREAN PRECURSOR)

"SHAKESPEARE'S happiest comedy!" cried Andrew Lang of *As You Like It,* proceeding after his graceful wont to sum up the reasons which he, and the rest of us, had found for rejoicing in the idyl of Arden. Now chief among these reasons was the "heavenly Rosalind": and second was the irrepressible Touchstone. And although the clown may, in sooth, have sprung full-motlied from the brain of Shakespeare, the lady had most indubitable forebears. She had a human and literary father in the person of Thomas Lodge. She had even a literary and almost human mother, whose name was Rosalynde, and whose story was singularly like her own.

It is one thing to record that the immediate source of *Romeo and Juliet* was that unpleasant, anti-papistical tale, *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet.* It is, *Deo gratias,* quite another to say that the precursor of *As You Like It* was Lodge's gentle *Rosalynde*—and that Lodge's romance derived in turn, but slightly, from the Chaucerian *Tale of*

Gamelyn. For even in its sources was *As You Like It* happy!

Some few of Shakespeare's sources were unlovely or unworthy, and for good results needed to be quite transmuted and transfigured by his sympathetic genius. But Thomas Lodge was the sort of man one would choose to pass on "secrets deeper than his own" to the Master Singer. He was, in the first place, a gentleman, and in the second place a scholar, and in the third place an adventurer. His "little span" was curiously coeval with the comings and goings of kings' children: for Thomas Lodge seems to have been born in 1558, the last year of Mary Tudor's reign and the first of Elizabeth's; while he died in that 1625 which saw the passing of James I and the advent of unhappy Charles. What a slice out of the history of England—what food indeed for the preacher's homily!

The maker of *Rosalynde* was born in London town, the son of Sir Thomas Lodge, sometime its Lord Mayor. The boy would seem to have inherited no discomfiting convictions upon Church or State, for he studied quietly and proceeded in the approved manner to Trinity College about 1573—quite as though neither he nor Oxford itself had recently been robbed of the incalculable heritage of Catholic Faith! Returning later to London, he began the study of law at Lincoln's Inn; but there the friendship of Robert Greene and Daniel and Barnabe Rich

and Drayton and Lyly lured Thomas toward the bright path of poetry and drama instead. For this defection he was subsequently cut off in his father's will. But the mother was more art-loving—or perhaps it was simply more son-loving!—and when she died in 1579, the youth wrote an affectionate epitaph, unfortunately now lost. In view of the later Shakespearean affiliations, it is a charming touch that Lodge's first professional literary work should have been a *Defense of Stage Plays,* published in 1580 as a reply to Gosson's *School of Abuse.* It has been claimed also, but not proved, that Thomas was himself an actor for a while. At least, there was a somewhat heavy tragedy called *The Wounds of Civil War* to his credit (or the contrary), and he undoubtedly collaborated with Greene in the satiric *Looking Glass for London and England.* He has been accused of various other dramas, but was probably not guilty, although his restless youth was full of experiments. He is said then for a while to have "exchanged bookes for armes"; and it is certain that about 1588 he sailed to Terceras and the Canary Islands with one Captain Clarke. For upon this memorable voyage, as he himself tells us, he composed the pretty, romantic idyl of *Rosalynde:* and being an Elizabethan and something of a Euphuist, he made apology lest his really smooth and elaborate story be found "rough, as hatched in

the storms of the ocean, and feathered in the surges of many perilous seas."

After Lodge's return to London he published in 1589 a volume of poems under the modest title, *Scillæs Metamorphosis: Enterlaced with the unfortunate love of Glaucus. Whereunto is annexed the delectable discourse of the discontented Satyr; with sundrie other most absolute Poems and Sonnets.* Then he ventured forth again upon the seas, this time to South America, visiting Brazil and amongst other places the famous Jesuit Library at Santos. Whether this was an event or merely an episode, who shall say? For conversions—reversions—were scarcely fashionable in Elizabeth's reign: yet by 1596 Thomas Lodge was publicly known as a Catholic. He still wrote: lyrics, in which he had the radiant Elizabethan facility; satires attacking the abuses of the time; and probably one pious tract, *Prosopopoeia, containing the tears of Marie, the Mother of God.* But for a while after his change of religion became known, it was necessary for him to flee England. So, with characteristic activity, he proceeded to study medicine at Avignon, whence he was graduated as a physician in 1600.

Then the old beloved, treacherous London called again, and Lodge returned to practice medicine—also, incidentally, to translate Josephus and Seneca! He was active during the plague of 1603, and wrote a treatise on the dread disease, which he dedicated

to the Lord Mayor. Then religious troubles drove him again from England. He returned later, and is said to have ministered professionally, chiefly to the recusant Catholics—which perhaps explains why his finances fell so low during these final years. At all events, the good doctor asked permission to travel overseas once again to collect debts due him; and he seems subsequently to have been both sued and for a while imprisoned for debts of his own. It was indeed troublous sailing for Thomas Lodge before the Ultimate Port loomed in sight, but he held to the mast with a high heart. Then at last, in 1625, and in his home on Old Fish Street in the parish of St. Mary Magdalen, the *grandfather* of Shakespeare's Rosalind died: a scholar, a poet, a man whose worst fault was that, in the words of one contemporary, he liked to have "an oar in every paper boat." He had never feared the great adventure of Life, nor the great adventure of Death—nor Faith, the greatest adventure of them all.

Rosalynde, Euphues' Golden Legacy, was published in 1590, the same year as Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia,* with which it has much in common. Both books were of the *novelli* type: picturesque, pedantic and leisurely romances with which various scholarly dreamers strove to soothe the strenuous matter of Elizabethan living. They were literary and emotional narcotics. They were also delightsome exercises for men who had freshly discovered the great-

ness of English speech and of the life about them. The very sub-title of *Rosalynde* proclaims its desired affinity with the pioneer of all the *novelli* in England, John Lyly's celebrated *Euphues;* and, stilted as Lodge's work sometimes is, it yet moves to freer measures than its original. It is a gracious, poetic and rather sophisticated idyl of love, the Court, the forest—and then more love. It tells first how old Sir John of Bordeaux dies, leaving a "golden legacy" of good (but soon forgotten) counsel—and three sons to work out their destinies. Saladyne, the eldest, promptly takes possession of the estate; while his second brother, Fernandyne, dreams of studious Aristotle; and the youngest (and favorite) son, Rosader, is reduced to the state of a mere serf or foot-boy. One day, while walking in the garden, the youth awakens to the fact that "those good parts that God hath bestowed upon me, the envy of my brother doth smother in obscurity." He accuses Saladyne of the wrong, and being threatened with bonds, he even attacks his brother's retainers with a garden-rake. Eventually Rosader, being of a "mild and courteous nature," is appeased by Saladyne's fair promises. Shortly after, the wily elder brother persuades him to enter a wrestling-match at the court of King Torismond—having meanwhile suborned the Norman champion to kill Rosader in the conflict.

Rosader delightedly travels to court: he watches the doughty Norman butchering all contestants—

quite in the manner of Shakespeare's Charles—and he catches sight of the king's fair daughter Alinda together with her fairer cousin Rosalynde, daughter to the banished king, Gerismond. "Upon her cheeks," Lodge tells us, "there seemed a battle between the Graces, who should bestow most favors to make her excellent. Her eyes were like those lamps that make the wealthy covert of the heavens more gorgeous, sparkling favor and disdain, courteous and yet coy, as if in them Venus had placed all her amorets, and Diana all her chastity."

Rosader first spies Rosalynde as he enters the list, and his eye is so "inveigled" that he stands distraught and has to be roused from his dream by a shake from the Norman. Thereupon he attacks the champion with great "fury of countenance"—and apparently much good muscle. And although Lodge's Rosalynde does not, like Shakespeare's, try to dissuade the young wrestler from entering the conflict, she does send him "such an amorous look as might have made the most coward desperate." Later on, when he has victoriously thrown the Norman, she sends him by a page a jewel from her own neck; and Rosader, having, apparently, already fallen into the poetic habit, retires into a tent and composes a "sonnet" in her praise. Then, with the laurel wreath upon his head and a company of boon companions at his heels, he sets out for his tempestuous home.

Now Lodge's Rosalynde, we are told, "accounted love a toy, and fancy a momentary passion, that as it was taken in with a gaze might be shaken off with a wink, and therefore feared not to dally in the flame." But scarcely had Rosader left the court when she discovered—like many another would-be salamander!—the might of her misprised god. She began to fall into the uncomfortable habit of dreaming about the virtues and perfections of her swain—"the comeliness of his person, the honor of his parents!"—as she sat solitary. Moreover, whole acres of worldly-wise counsel concerning the sort of mate she ought to choose in view of her fallen fortunes, proved utterly barren. Then, "smiling to herself," and taking up her lute, she broke into a lyric as sweet as a May morning, perhaps the most blossomy of all that Lodge has given us.

Scarcely has Rosalynde finished the madrigal when she finds herself rudely confronted by her uncle, Torismond. Whether that little affair with Rosader has been observed one knows not, but the usurping king suddenly begins to tremble at the power of his niece's beauty, fearing lest one of the courtiers aspire to marriage and thus claim the crown in Rosalynde's name. So he comes now "with a stern countenance full of wrath," and orders her out of his court by nightfall. The little princess, utterly dismayed, defends herself boldly, yet "in reverent terms." But

Torismond is the true forebear of Shakespeare's Frederick, a domestic as well as a political tyrant.

Then comes a touch so exquisite that Shakespeare adopted it wholly in spirit, if not in letter. It is the defence of Rosalynde by her cousin Alinda, who, in Lodge's simple but perfect phrase, "loved her more than herself." The result is the one with which the comedy has familiarized us—both princesses are banished together. And although Rosalynde weeps, Alinda smiles. To tell the truth, there is an undertone of deep humanity in all this: for who can fancy life with the impossible king being at all bearable after Rosalynde's departure? Alinda is the first to see that (as her successor says) the way before them leads "to liberty and not to banishment," so she comforts Rosalynde with a high heart and many sage words and a little spice of laughter. The Celia of *As You Like It* is always trembling upon the verge of enormous wisdom. She is no mere shadow or foil to Rosalynde, but quite her match in wit and resource. This, one can but think, is directly due to Lodge, who was very partial to his princess Alinda, giving her many of the best lines in his romance—and frequently setting her up as an oracle, with copious Latin quotations tripping upon her tongue. For be it remembered that Thomas Lodge was close enough to the Renaissance to admire oracular ladies, and to adore the "serene classics."

Gathering up, then, their jewels and a few neces-

saries, and disguised, the one as a page the other as a simple village maid, Rosalynde and Alinda—or as they now call themselves, Ganymede and Aliena—travel past the vineyards toward the great forest of Arden (Ardennes). Here they find the trees engraved with most unlooked-for "sonnets" and "eclogues," the work of a certain "perplexed shepherd" Montanus, bemoaning his love for the scornful Phoebe. Then does Ganymede, wounded perhaps into assumed levity, begin his celebrated diatribe upon womanhood. "You may see what mad cattle you women be," he (she) cries to Aliena, "whose hearts sometimes are made of adamant that will touch with no impression, and sometimes of wax that is fit for every form. . . . "

"And I pray you," quoth the other princess, "if your robes were off, what mettle are you made of that you are so satirical against women? Is it not a foul bird that defiles its own nest? Beware, Ganymede, that Rosader hear you not, if he do, perchance you will make him leap so far from love that he will anger every vein in your heart."

"I speak now," says Ganymede, "as I am Aliena's page, not as I am Gerismond's daughter; for put me but into a petticoat, and I will stand defiance to the uttermost that women are courteous, constant, virtuous and what not!"

Meanwhile Rosader has been suffering woes of

his own, and in final desperation at his brother's ill-treatment he leaves home in company with his faithful English servant, Adam Spencer. They wander into the forest (of course—for "journeys end in lovers' meeting, every wise man's son doth know!") and Rosader, having still "the lively image of Rosalynde" painted upon his memory, contracts the habit of carving his own verses upon the unprotesting trees. Then, upon a day, the inevitable happens—he comes suddenly upon Aliena and her lovely page, turned shepherds in this *vie sauvage,* as they seek shelter from the sun beneath the great trees of Arden. It is a charming scene, almost in the true spirit of *As You Like It,* save for Touchstone's absence: for Aliena asks gently "leading" questions, and Ganymede falls to chaffing Rosader, even reminding him that "faint heart never won fair lady." And the youth, being challenged to describe his mistress' excellences, replies in one of those superlative bursts of song which are the wonder and wild delight of this sometimes monotonous "historie." Here are some of the most colorful stanzas of *Rosalynde's Description:*

Like to the clear in highest sphere
Where all imperial glory shines,
Of selfsame color is her hair,
Whether unfolded or in twines:
Heigh ho, fair Rosalynde.

Her eyes are sapphires set in snow,
Refining heaven by every wink:
The gods do fear when as they glow
And I do tremble when I think;
Heigh ho, would she were mine.

* * * * *

Her lips are like two budded roses
Whom ranks of lilies neighbor nigh,
Within which bounds she balm encloses,
Apt to entice a deity:
Heigh ho, fair Rosalynde.

* * * * *

Then muse not, nymphs, though I bemoan
The absence of fair Rosalynde,
Since for her fair there is fairer none,
Nor for her virtues so divine;
Heigh ho, fair Rosalynde.
Heigh ho, my heart, would God that she were mine!

This obviously is much finer than any of the verses Shakespeare attributes to Orlando. In fact, Orlando's verses are innocently farcical—just as the verses of most well-loving but unliterary lovers are to this day: whereas Lodge gives Rosader the verses of a poet, and even Montanus the verses of a poet-aster. But if Rosader's poetry is better than Orlando's, his conversation is not so good. In the first place, it is intolerably long; but it serves to occupy Ganymede—who promptly offers to personate Rosalynde for the lover's consolation!—through many pages of pleasant banter, between the feeding of

their flocks and the ups and downs of the Phoebe plot.

For Phoebe is an important person in Lodge's romance. She is a queen of Arcady, a woodland belle and heiress, who takes the devotion of Montanus as a right and would have the love of Ganymede as a right also. Failing in this, the proud, pretty creature falls ill almost to death: "for as fire suppressed grows to the greater flame, and the current stopped to the more violent stream, so love smothered wrings the heart with the deeper passion." In this extremity she writes that humble confession of her love for Ganymede which Montanus himself bears to the page, becoming, as Lodge says, "a willing mesenger of his own martyrdom." For, unlike Shakespeare's Silvius, Montanus sees "day at a little hole," and understands only too well Phoebe's sudden passion for Aliena's fair attendant.

It must be admitted that Thomas Lodge, being tied down to no dramatic unities, takes time to make Aliena's own romance far more credible than it appears in *As You Like It*. To be sure, she falls in love with the same man—under another name. For Saladyne, being himself banished by Torismond, and duly repenting his evil treatment of Rosader, wanders like everyone else to Arden. And, falling asleep, he is discovered by his younger brother just as a hungry lion is about to spring upon him. Rosader, after wrestling with Orlando's own tempta-

tion, saves him, and so the two are reconciled. And when, a few days later, some forest ruffians fall upon Ganymede and Aliena, desiring to steal away the fair shepherdess, it is Saladyne and not Rosader who rescues her from their hands. Naturally enough, an intimacy springs up between them, and the little *partie carrée* partakes many a pleasant discourse; until upon a day Princess Alinda discovers that in escaping the robbers she has fallen captive to Saladyne. Nor does she fight her overthrow very whole-heartedly. "Women must love, or they must cease to live," she muses complacently, "and therefore did nature frame them fair, that they might be subject to fancy." So, since "where love leads delay is loathsome," there is nothing for it but to set the following Sunday for their nuptials. . . .

"Truth!" now cries Ganymede, with innocent guile, "but a happy day should that be, if Rosader that day might be married to Rosalynde!" Manlike, poor Rosader is not greatly stirred by any such improbable hypothesis; and he almost resents the jest when Ganymede cheerfully promises to produce his lady-love, through a friend "deeply experienced in necromancy and magic," when the wedding feast is laid.

It is on this joyous occasion that the exiled king, Gerismond, first meets Ganymede—and "fetched a deep sigh" at the resemblance to his lost daughter. The *dénouement* is then worked out as Shakespeare

later follows it: Gerismond swearing to give Rosader his daughter, *if* she can be found—and Phoebe agreeing to wed Montanus, *if* she can be cured of her love for the page. Then Rosalynde, having discreetly retired for a while, enters clothed in green, "with a kirtle of rich sendal, so quaint that she seemed Diana triumphing in the forest; upon her head she wore a chaplet of roses, which gave her such a grace that she looked like Flora perked in the pride of all her flowers." And while there is rejoicing on all sides—and poor selfish Saladyne is cured of his sudden "melancholy" by discovering that *his* bride also is a princess!—old Corydon the shepherd comes "skipping in," most marvelously appareled, to tell them that the priest is at church and tarries for their coming.

But Lodge's romance does not close with wedding bells. Scarcely has the marriage feast begun when Rosader's second brother, Fernandyne comes upon the scene, announcing that the twelve peers of France wait outside the forest, determined at last to fight Torismond and restore Gerismond to his throne. Then the cry of *Saint Denis!* rings through Arden, and there is much buckling-on of armor as the men rush off, one and all, to battle. And the three little "war brides," Rosalynde, Alinda and Phoebe, are left to console one another, until the good news of Gerismond's victory calls them all up to Paris for the thirty days' merry-making which ends the tale.

It must by this time be evident to all readers of Rosalynde that *As You Like It* was nothing more or less than a dramatized novel. And out of this most problematical of all literary feats, Shakespeare made his "happiest comedy"! Just what did he do in recasting the Arden romance? First of all, he eliminated much superfluous and inharmonious matter. Then he quickened the tempo of the whole work. Last of all, he created the immortal Touchstone, the melancholy Jaques, and—lest the story seem still too remotely artificial—the refreshing earth-earthiness of Audrey.

The "speeding up" process is very noticeable in the opening of *As You Like It,* where, instead of Lodge's long account of old Sir Roland's death, Shakespeare plunges at once into the real action of the play in a highly spirited scene between Orlando and Oliver. The first entrance of Rosalind and Celia is, one must confess, rather sedately reminiscent of *Euphues' Golden Legacy.* They converse (it is not talking) with a certain rhetorical balance and studied wit until the entrance of Touchstone. With his "Mistress, you must come away to your father!" *humanity* comes tripping upon the scene.

And almost immediately one is aware of a certain sporting spirit in Rosalind. Through all her banter about those who "dote upon rib-breaking," one knows that she wants to see the wrestling-match. If she lived today, she would drive a high-power

motor-car and doubtless make experiments in aviation! She would also fall in love, wilfully and strongly and sweetly—and when the larger issues called, she would be found blithely faithful. Shakespeare makes it very clear to us that Rosalind *enjoys* her boy's masquerade, as neither Viola nor Imogen enjoys it. She even enjoys making Orlando's life a little miserable by her teasing—until the moment when she discovers that her own life is made miserable by his innocent delays and broken trysts. Then comes the human, feminine breakdown; not pages of self-questioning and sage arguments, as with Lodge's earlier heroine; not even a sudden burst of lyric beauty—just the swift confession, half sob and half jest, to Celia—

> O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathoms deep I am in love!

The crystalline serenity of Arden is Shakespeare's own, for Lodge's retreat is prey to highwaymen and even to war—but the blessed William will not have even a "clock in the forest." It is curious how, with seemingly contradictory method, he both humanizes and idealizes: making a man, albeit a young one, out of Orlando—and a philosopher, albeit not too old a one, out of his banished Duke. What he has made of his wise fool, Touchstone, and his foolish sage, Jaques, all the world knows. In brief, he took

the gentle, high-bred, rambling romance of good Thomas Lodge—a literary narcotic we called it, in reverence and not in scorn—and out of it he made a play! That tells the whole story; that explains the variety, the simplifying, all the accentuation of light and shade. It explains his dashing but still "heavenly" Rosalind; his boorish Audrey and William; Amiens' monopoly of the lyrics; even that perfect, final note of Jaques' bored departure from the sunny love feast of Arden. Yes, it explains all—in so far as any great work of art may be explained. For it is as Rabindranath Tagore once sang with subtle sweetness: *He who can open the bud does it so simply!* . . . But the rose-tree was planted first by Thomas Lodge.

SHAKESPEARE, THREE CENTURIES YOUNG

IT IS the incorrigible, unquenchable vitality of Shakespeare that is always flaming up and scorching the cool critic's face. He will not stay dead—as a classic poet should, save when resurrected for some official, liturgical celebration, or for the exploiting of some particularly attractive young interpreter. He will not even stay venerable. He is younger—possibly because his way of life and language is two momentous centuries nearer to us—even than Geoffrey Chaucer, which is saying much. Just when people began to suspect that the blessed William had succeeded where Ponce de Leon failed, I do not know. It may have been about the time that modern managers began to discard the "revised" and amended versions of his plays put into shape by eighteenth and nineteenth century managers; but I think they were not quite convinced prior to 1916. It was the tercentenary of his "birthday into eternity" which proved the real surprise.

Not often in the history of our self-centered world, busy with its beeves and its fatlings, its marrying and giving in marriage, does the clock of

civilization stop suddenly to do honor to a poet. To be sure, it is declared to stop, piously coaxed to stop, for celebrations which grow more and more frequent; but beyond a few learned brochures or a few chaotic committee meetings, little usually happens. But a few things did happen back in 1916, and they were not altogether the expected ones. For it was one of the most heart-breaking of all the war years—a time when there was

> thunder hushing all the grove,
> And did Love live, not even Love could sing!

The Old World, staggering under its burdens, could do little for the praise of art; its universities and its theatres were full of emptiness, its scholars had their own bitter distractions. So with beautiful fitness, the New World took up that duty of honoring Shakespeare—taking it after the New World's way, with a splendid enthusiasm and obviousness. There were not too many wreathes placed on statues; there were rather few ambitious words spoken or occasional poems written; but everywhere, from Maine to California, there were *performances of the plays*. And by far the greatest number of these productions were not by professional actors, although these did their best and did it *con amore* for the actor's own poet. They were by young amateurs—amateurs in city colleges, in country towns, in church guilds. The experiments stretched out like a carpet

of gold or a canopy of sunshine: and Main Street discovered that this formidable master Shakespeare, instead of being three centuries old was three centuries young!

The actors, the professional actors, had, of course, known this all along. That was the secret of their perennial passion to risk bankruptcy and the ordeal by comparison in every happy or unhappy revival of his plays. But the audiences, and by the same token the managers, were more sceptical. When it had been freshly proved that the dramas would act—even when acted rather badly—other things followed. The vitality of Shakespeare was reestablished, and his lovers grew bold. So that ever since this momentous year 1916, the burden of proof has rested upon the people who denied the playwright's magnetism, rather than upon those who asserted it. Revivals have followed hot upon the heels of other revivals. Shylock is shown to be so human that he can be interpreted either as a villain or a martyr. Juliet is far, far younger than the youngest debutante. Hamlet, that disenchanted idealist, becomes a jousting place for all the complexes known to psychoanalysis. And the feminists are demanding from what *woman*—from Mary Arden his mother, from Anne Hathaway, from the mysterious Mary Fitton, or even from his patroness and queen—Shakespeare learned so much about life?

The man is, in a peculiar sense, our own; the tra-

ditional high-water mark of English speaking drama and poetry, but still more than this. It is merely a truism—that is to say, a truth which has grown tiresome because no one any longer cares to challenge it—to say that he is for all people as for all time. He is one of that small Uranian group of *universals,* the supreme poets who have been both popular and profound, who have loved and belonged to life as passionately as to literature; or rather, who belong to literature because their great art has first so passionately loved and belonged to life! This, surely, is the truth of Pater's much misinterpreted mandate to crowd "as many pulsations as possible into the given time"—those great passions which give us a "quickened sense of life." It is not to play at life that he is counseling, to experiment heedlessly with the good and the evil. But—"not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us . . . is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening." Not so did William Shakespeare sleep. In scarcely more than half a century of remarkably sane, remarkably industrious and none too wildly adventurous a life, he seems to have run the gamut of human experience. As all the world knows, he was the son of a burgess (later high-bailiff) of Stratford—a prosperous farmer and glover by trade. His mother, Mary Arden, was of gentler birth and of no small inheritance: a daughter of those Warwickshire Ardens whose gentility was

older than the Normans, and whose Catholic faith proved, in most instances, stronger than Elizabethan tyranny. The poet had that rural youth which most of us would love to look back upon—youth in the rich, sweet Stratford country. He had the usual grammar school instruction of his day; the usual amusements of hunting (not to say poaching!) pageant-seeing, even play-acting, when visiting companies of actors came to the Guild hall. And when he was something past eighteen years, he married Mistress Ann Hathaway, a widow eight years his senior, of the neighboring town of Shottery. Shottery was very "papistical" in those days; it had an upper room where Mass was celebrated from time to time, and where, according to an interesting tradition, Shakespeare's first religious marriage (not, of course, a legal one) was performed.* Their first child was born the following May; and twins in the year 1585. Much bootless writing has been expended to prove that the marriage was happy, or again, unhappy: bootless first of all because most human relationships are both happy and unhappy, but doubly bootless in the artist's story. It is enough that Shakespeare had his care-free youth and his young romance. When, in 1587, his father's fortunes made hopeless shipwreck, he was ready to set out for the new life of London—to repair the for-

* For the discussion of this point and many kindred ones, see Dr. James J. Walsh's valuable pamphlet *Was Shakespeare a Catholic?* in the "Catholic Mind Series."

tunes alike of the elder people and of the young family he had founded. Very possibly he had already some relation with Lord Strange's (later known as the Lord Chamberlain's) Company, which had played in Stratford during that same year. At any rate, men turn to their own without over-much pushing. A Shakespeare will find his theatre whether or not fate bids him for a while hold horses at its entrance!

The chronology of Shakespeare's dramas is exceedingly difficult to ascertain. *Love's Labour's Lost* is usually conceded as his first play; but there seems little doubt that during those early years in London he was kept busy revising or else collaborating upon those chronicle histories for which the London stage was avid toward the end of the sixteenth century. It is just a little startling for us, who see modern drama fighting for its life against the inroads of the motion picture, to remember that Elizabethan London—a town of not more than one hundred and twenty-five thousand people—supported *five theatres,* and this when the attendance of *women* was only under sufferance! A score of eager dramatists were at work—Lodge, Greene, Kyd, Marlowe—later the learned and dear Ben Jonson, Chapman, Dekker, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher, Heywood, Middleton! In the new, vibrant national sense which had come to England, drama was in the very breath and life of the people. Noble and

common alike thronged to the play-houses, until the Queen forbade performances on Thursdays, lest the ancient and honorable amusement of bear-baiting should perish from neglect.

Romeo and Juliet was the first of Shakespeare's immortal tragedies; it was printed in 1597, with *Richard III* and *Richard II*. Then followed more histories, later comedies such as *Much Ado, As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. From the very beginning of the seventeenth century, our "sweetest Shakespeare" reveals himself as dominated by a high and profound seriousness: the seriousness of *Measure for Measure,* of *All's Well That Ends Well,* and of that tragic series which began with *Julius Cæsar,* and—including *Hamlet, Othello, Lear* and *Macbeth* —ended with *Antony and Cleopatra* or *Timon of Athens*. After 1608 the poet, or perhaps his London, appears to have craved some lightening of the burden; and Shakespeare, the ever-variable, before retiring to Stratford, gave the world those gracious and elusive "romances" (as Professor Dowden calls them) of *Cymbeline, The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*. His final work was, of course, in 1613, upon *Henry VIII*—a particularly noble drama marred by Fletcher's particularly incoherent last act.

William Shakespeare was a large shareholder in the company which produced his plays. He was a somewhat smaller actor, tradition identifying him with the rôles of Adam in *As You Like It* and the

Ghost in *Hamlet*. With his sublime poetic insight and superhuman sympathy, he carried the treasure of a practically balanced mind. It was not by accident that Master William Shakespeare, gentleman and landowner, was able to return to Stratford some five years before his death with a liberal competency, to live gently and leisurely amongst his own family and his own well-ordered farms.

There is something enormously winsome about this rounded personality, this poet who contrived to be so unconscious a genius and so conscious a fellow-mortal at the same time. He has endeared himself to all sorts of people: to scholars and to children, to actors and practical politicians, to esthetes and ascetics. There are particular reasons why he is so dear to Catholics. In the first place, there are excellent credibilities for believing him to have been one of that then outlawed company himself. A thousand circumstances of his life—the avoidance of Anglican worship, his consorting with Catholics in London, his abstention from any tribute at the time of Elizabeth's death, the phrasing of his Will, and the Stratford tradition, persistent from the seventeenth century, that he "dyed a Papist"—all carry weight. Each is, of course, inconclusive. There is scarcely a time in history when it is more difficult to ascertain a man's exact religion, unless that man be a martyr or a high noble, than this turbulent reign of Elizabeth. The outward legal

"conformity" must have seemed, *at first,* to matter so little! Henry had worked and Mary had counter-worked, until the "Established" Church seemed very much a matter of royal whim. Little by little men realized that an Act of Parliament had stolen their sacraments—that a cataclysm had come in super-natural things. Then sprang up the bitterness of attack and defence; then, indeed, whoso was not against repudiated Catholicism was to be counted with her! In this unparalleled bitterness Shake-speare had no part; or, rather, he had the part of allaying it in the artist's potent yet impersonal way. He was writing histories: that was a way. He was dealing with problems of Catholic conscience in his plays: that was another way. Many of the other dramatists delighted in scenes attacking the old Church and defaming her religion. But Shake-speare gave us Friar Lawrence; his monks move through the plays as figures of mercy; and this is how he speaks of the orisons in Isabel's convent:

> true prayers,
> That shall be up at heaven, and enter there
> Ere sunrise; prayers from preserved souls,
> From fasting maids whose minds are dedicate
> To nothing temporal.

Those who find a few political passages in *King John* over-bitter, would do well to read the candid stric-tures of *Everyman* or *Piers Plowman,* and many

another frank but faithful medieval protest against the human side of mighty Mother Church. After that, they would do well to remember that *Richard II* had to be taken off the London stage because of its supposed aspersions upon Elizabeth. And, finally, there is the enormous courage of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, a play designed to glorify, to justify, almost to apotheosize the Queen. Yet Shakespeare centers practically the entire interest and pathos in the repudiated Katharine of Aragon; he traces Wolsey's fall and the King's break with Rome like a lawyer; while in Henry's "dainty one," Anne Boleyn, he gives us either his one lay-figure or else the consummate hypocrite of all his dramatic gallery. Anne smiles as inscrutably as Mona Lisa; she achieves her purpose, like Shaw's later Anne, but gives us never one hint of her own heart. Small wonder that the more complaisant Fletcher was pressed into service for the last act!

After all, the real question here is not whether Shakespeare himself was a Catholic. That is a matter which concerned most momentously himself and his Maker. What concerns posterity is the attitude of his art toward the Catholic conscience of life. This attitude, as has been pointed out, was one of unfailing reverence toward the old Church and her sacraments. It was even an attitude of unity and understanding. In his candor and his complexity, his boldness and his humbleness, his

patience with the sins and foibles of men, his fealty to the high and costly ideals of life, Shakespeare might almost stand as a symbol of the mysterious *inclusiveness* of Catholicism. That is why Carlyle spoke of him as the "noblest product" of the religion which England was by way of "abolishing." That is why Heinrich Heine, in his oft-quoted passage, declared with so curious an insight:

It is lucky for us that Shakespeare came just at the right time, that he was a contemporary of Elizabeth and James, while Protestantism, it is true, expressed itself in the unbridled freedom of thought which prevailed, but which had not yet entered into life or feeling, and the kingdom lighted by the last rays of setting chivalry still bloomed and gleamed in all the glory of poetry. True, the popular faith of the Middle Ages, or Catholicism, was gone as regarded doctrine, but it existed as yet with all its magic in men's hearts, and held its own in manners, customs and views. . . .

Of course, it would be absurd to deny that there are minor objections, even upon moral grounds, to some few Shakespearean passages. Every once in a while some new critic discovers these, and is as scandalously horrified as good Lamartine or good Canon Sheehan. But the fact is that these are really objections to Elizabethan habits of speech and manners, and that they apply far more strongly to Shakespeare's contemporaries than to the poet

himself. The language of his day was plain, speaking of gross things grossly and light things lightly. Modern ears are offended by all this. Moreover we love—in spite of the newspapers!—to believe that today is better than yesterday, and that tomorrow will be better than both! We believe that we are a little more decent and a little more humane than our forefathers. Now whether this is a matter of manners or of morals—a deeper stratum of Christianity or merely another layer of civilization—Time and the Wise Men must determine. Meanwhile (and rightly), we cut short the garrulities of Juliet's nurse, we edit Hamlet's words to Ophelia, and we, who find no fault with Sardou's *Tosca,* and tolerate the cynical vagaries of the newest Czecho-Slovak fancy, wince at the plain, bitter words of *Measure for Measure.* It is all somewhat absurd —but, one hopes the clock hands do not turn backward. Still, it remained for our own sophisticated nineteenth century to present such a theme as *Monna Vanna* in the perfect verbal chastity of Mæterlinck. Shakespeare would have been so much more brutal, and so much more true!

There are two familiar sentences from Aristotle which Shakespeare's plays are always bringing to one's mind. The first is that "a work of art must be full of beauty, agreeable, desirable, and morally worthy." What more perfect summing up of *Much Ado,* or *The Winter's Tale* or *Julius Cæsar* or *The*

Tempest? Then there is that immortal dictum that tragedy "purifies the mind by terror and pity." *Terror* and *Pity!* What words could more perfectly concentrate the message of *Lear,* of *Othello,* of *Hamlet,* of *Macbeth?* Scarcely in all history have a man's vices and virtues been more pitilessly catalogued than Cardinal Wolsey's: what with his own words, and the King's, and Katharine's and Griffith's, we have little left to learn of him who found worldly honors

a burden
Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven.

Yet, who is not purified by the confession of this great one fallen low?—

I have ventur'd,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory;
But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride
At length broke under me; and now has left me
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream, that must forever hide me . . .
Let's dry our eyes: and thus far hear me, Cromwell:
And—when I am forgotten, as I shall be,
And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention
Of me more must be heard of—say I taught thee;
Say, Wolsey—that once trod the ways of glory,
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honor—
Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in;
A sure and safe one, though thy master miss'd
it. . . .

Love thyself last: cherish those hearts that hate thee:
. . . be just, and fear not.
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
Thy God's and truth's . . .
. . . O Cromwell, Cromwell,
Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, He would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies . . .

Shakespeare does not compromise with the eternal verities—he is not in the least dazzled by the kingdom and the power and the glory of the world about him. In an age of candid violence he keeps always his sense of the sacredness of human life and human relationships. To an age of pulsing (if metaphysical) materialism, he throws out the sudden simplicity and spirituality of—say—Macduff's comment upon the slain Duncan:

Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope
The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence
The life o' the building . . .

In fact, his enormous moral rightness is always shining out of the stories; the fact that, for all his love and delight in men, his sympathies are fundamentally "on the side of the angels." He does not let sin triumph save in its own deluge of death and disenchantment. He is ingenious to bring good out of evil. Something of this large and reconciling view is lost when modern managers omit the last

scene of *Romeo and Juliet,* or ring down the curtain before the young king, who is to right old wrongs in Denmark, draws near the dead and heart-broken Hamlet. But it was not lost in the dramatist's conception. To hate sin yet love the sinner was his fine achievement: how difficult a one we know, not only from the failure of so many modern dramas and novels, but from our own failures as well!

There is one imagination of the mind and another imagination of the heart, and without both, not all the technique of Shakespeare's genius could so have held the mirror up to life. He has no types, no caricatures: even his fools are human beings, at once pitiable and variable and glad. Consider the comic pathos of Malvolio, predestined and self-centered bore! Consider the *humanness* of his so-different kings on their march toward death! And always there is the smiting reality of his women, tragic or merry or mighty or frail—the women who have filled volumes of criticism simply because Shakespeare loved them so truly that he was not afraid to paint them in all sorts and conditions. What wizard was this Master William of Stratford to pierce the heart of a Portia and a Juliet, to show the different virtue of Desdemona and Imogen, the different wantonness of Cressida and Cleopatra? How should he sound all the depths and heights between the exquisite innocence of Miranda and the grim guilt of Lady Macbeth—between the idyllic

obsessions of Titania and the brainstorms of Kate the Shrew? For a lesser artist, it would have been so easy to portray Isabel as a mere symbol of chastity: but Shakespeare shows her, when the hour strikes, rich in that other great virtue which is not always the companion of chastity—forgiving Angelo and begging his life from the avenging duke. And finally, he pays woman the compliment of treating her as a human being, and allowing her to have friendships and to make sacrifices for her own sex. He gives to Rosalind a Celia, to Beatrice a Hero, and to Desdemona that quite unheroic and blundering Emilia who is not afraid to die in her defence.

The Shakespearean sense of comedy and fantasy does not always strike the gong of contemporary taste—that is inevitable. Neither does the balanced and intricate Shakespearean sense of plot, which is inevitable also. But the compellingly contemporaneous quality of his characterizations is almost unbelievable. All those women of his ever need is to speak for themselves, and to be listened to. And his men are almost as convincing, even when they are that most perilous of dramatic creations, heroic or historic revivals. What more modern than the *blasé* and cynical Jaques? What more modern than the problems of Hamlet, eternal tragedy of the subjective soul brought face to face with objective wrong—image, as he might be, of many a harassed groper with the world today? The inevitable com-

plexities and perversities of life are clearer (very much clearer!) to this Elizabethan poet than to the most superior and scientific of recent psychologists: the provocation as well as the perfidy of Shylock, the nobility and the madness of Othello, the impotent, infinite blackness of the stricken Macbeth as he staggers half-protesting toward his Hell—

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle . . .

God, God forgive us all! may almost be taken as the keynote of Shakespeare's drama: not the laxity of Beaumont and Fletcher's easy tolerance; not the merely modern spirit, curious and indefinite, which withholds judgment because it is frankly uncertain by what canons to judge, but a very different thing. George Meredith's summing up of Shakespeare was eternally right:

Thy greatest knew thee, Mother Earth; unsour'd
He knew thy sons. He prob'd from hell to hell
Of human passions, but of love deflower'd
His wisdom was not, for he knew thee well.

Genius alone can achieve much in this world; it may even attain to a centenary of greatness. But when men are coerced into a tercentenary celebra-

tion, one may be sure that genius has not stood alone, but has mated him with love. Only from such parenthood are the sons of the morning, the supreme artists, born: *genius,* which Hugo's fine words have described as "a promontory jutting out into the infinite"; and *love,* which so far as human speech may define her at all, is just a spark thrown from the living forge of God. For love is not blind. Love does not tolerate. Love *understands.*

Before I tell of Thee, God's Son,
And all the sweet salvation
That Thy birth brought to laboring men,
Make me Thy little child again,
Bid me put off the years, and be
Once more in meek humility
Thy little one and wondering-eyed.
Give me their faith who stood beside
The manger that Thy cradle was;
Vision of oxen and of ass
To see Thee curled on Mary's knee.
Yea, give me their humility.

* * * * *

Ere I behold Thy mysteries
Force Thou my soul upon her knees!

KATHARINE TYNAN HINKSON

WHILE all things were in quiet silence, and the night in the midst of her course, Thy Almighty Word, O Lord, came down from heaven, from Thy royal throne . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. Like an epic flow the sentences of the Breviary; but the brief Gospel story is the crowning poem of all the ages. There, out on the hillside, are the shepherds—simple men, yet honest and watchful, and ready to take God

at His word; walking in their midst, one tall, golden angel bringing the tidings of great joy. Then all at once, the blue-black heavens roll back, the flood-gates are let down, and the high celestial multitude is revealed, chanting its psalm of glory and of peace . . .

And why this piercing, dazzling vision of things hidden from the beginning of the world? Because —over there in the rocky cave which served as stable —the Desired of Nations is lying, a little, helpless Babe! There was never a more dramatic scene in the whole pageant of humanity than that first Christmas night. Small wonder that the mystic turns faint with rapture, while poet and painter wax dizzy from sheer joy. Mary, so young and flower-like, presses Him to her breast; Joseph and the quiet beasts hold vigil; at last the shepherds are heard drawing near. Somewhere, far across sea and desert, the faithful Magi are traveling on. But Bethlehem sleeps profoundly, as if nothing at all had happened: and all the while the angels and one star are watching overhead!

It was Francis of Assisi who put into our churches the Christmas Manger—the "Crib," as it is familiarly called: Francis the Little Poor Man, who was poet and lover and saint all in one. Well, the lovers, thank God! are always with us; and the poets—a little band; and the saints, perhaps—who knows? Even if these failed, there would still be the mothers

and the little children. So the Manger stays, a concrete symbol, beautiful and humble and oft-repeated, of the poetry of Christmas.

The Nativity, Aubrey de Vere used to say, is one of the few Christian mysteries which does not contain matter too stupendous for poetry. It is so tender that it ceases to confound. Unlike the Crucifixion or the Resurrection or even the Ascension, it is, at least in its externals, most comfortingly human. Hence was Coventry Patmore never weary of reiterating the great dictum of the saints, that to meditate upon the Incarnation was the supreme and perfect wisdom:

For ah! who can express
How full of bonds and simpleness
    Is God;
How narrow is He,
And how the wide, waste field of possibility
    Is only trod
Straight to His homestead in the human heart;
    Whose thoughts but live and move
Round Man; Who woos his will
To wedlock with His own, and does distil
To that drop's span
    The attar of all rose-fields of all love!

It is no stranger, then, than the progress of seed and bud and blossom, that very early there should have grown up a Christmas poetry. In the primitive Madonna of the Catacombs Christian art found one

of its first expressions; and if the Madonna and Child have become (with one tragic exception!) the most popular symbol of entire Christianity, are they not still more essentially the symbol of Bethlehem? It was as *Mysterium Ecclesiæ, the Mystery,* that the gentle Ambrose sang of Christmas; and others sang with him in those early and heroic centuries, turning with very imaginable joy to this peaceful theme, as from the sorrows of Good Friday or the never-distant *Dies Iræ.* Yet it was emphatically different, this older poetry of Christmas, from those later lyrics which have made themselves the wonder and delight of the centuries. It was a didactic, a definitive poetry. The subject was still fresh—beautifully but not less perilously—fresh; and the Fathers took nothing for granted. They were preoccupied with the eternal significance of the God-Birth among men, with the mystery of this Christ who was Ever Ancient and Ever Young. And so there grew up a whole body of triumphal Christmas hymns, of which Prudentius' great Nativity is one of the most celebrated among the early examples, and *Adeste Fideles* among the later.

Already, one distinguishes an undertone rather of tenderness than of triumph. The pathos of the divine paradox was beginning to pierce men's hearts, although the glory still ruled their heads. More and more they dreamed—and sang—of Christmas for its own sake; and, ceasing to explain, they

knelt down beside the Manger-Throne just to marvel, to adore. This was to be the enduring note of Christmas poetry, this personal, realistic note; it struck, in deepest truth, the passing of the hymn and the homily into the poem. One of its earliest authentic expressions is attributed to a certain Strabo, who died in his Swabian monastery about 849 A.D., and whose *Lumen Inclytum Refulget* anticipates the flute-calls of Crashaw and a hundred later lyrists:

God, the Maker of the heavens,
  God, the Shaper of the earth,
Crown and glory of the angels
  Comes, a Babe of human birth.

In His span the heavens are measured,
  On His palm He holds the sun,
Yet in swathing bands enfolded,
  Here He lies, a Little One.

Lo! the God Whose word almighty
  Formed the ages, is at rest,
Fondled on the Virgin's bosom,
  Nurtured on the Mother's breast.*

St. Benno, who seems to have lived through the whole of the eleventh century, stood sponsor for an exquisite little Christmas song of close kin to Strabo's. But the greater part of all that prolific

* Translated by the Hon. D. J. Donahue in his *Early Christian Hymns.*

religious literature which grew up in France from about that time, as in England a century or two later, did not take the direct form of Christmas poetry. Enormously popular, of course, were the apocryphal Gospels of the Infancy, which reached Europe by way of the Orient, while the legends of the Virgin flourished apace. One of these cycles, *Les Miracles de Nostre Dame* (in 30,000 verses!) by Gautier de Coinci is a very storehouse of highly romantic devotional lore, and is declared by Gaston Paris "le monument le plus curieux et souvent le plus singulier de la piété enfantine du moyen age."* Equally naïve and somewhat less extravagant, perhaps, were the religious lyrics springing up in England during those faithful feudal centuries. Very often the popular Middle English hymns to the Blessed Virgin were bi-lingual, with a French or Latin refrain (which engaging trick Helen Parry Eden has revived most effectively): but the *Good Orison of Our Lady,* for instance, was no more a Christmas poem than was the very tender *Wooing of Our Lord.* They were, in fact, religious love songs—as some of them were frankly called—mixing up divine and human emotions not with the ingeniousness of the psychoanalyst but with the fragrant ingenuousness of the provençal poet—and the intrepidity of Patmore himself. Evidently the childlike but strenuous medieval temper was less

* *La Littérature Francaise au Moyen Age.* Gaston Paris.

sensitive to the spell of the divine Infant than to that of the crucified Saviour-Knight or His mild Mother, the Virgin Queen "so fair and free." But, then, are not all active children more interested in stories about kings and queens and soldiers than in stories about other children?

By the fifteenth century this poetry had matured sufficiently for the personal, poignant note of the Holy Infancy to rise again to the surface in a little lyric by John Mauburne, sometime abbot of Livry. It is a singularly touching colloquy between the pilgrim and the Christ Child, very modern in all save its clinging to the old Latin tongue:

Ah! how humble is Thy birth
  In the lowly manger,
Thou the Lord of heaven and earth,
  Weeping as a stranger;
If a King indeed art Thou,
Where is all Thy glory now?
  Where Thy halls of splendor?
Here is nought but poverty,
Barren need and penury,
  Little Child so tender!

Hither hath a love sublime
  Drawn me down so lowly,
Love of man whose greed and crime
  Make the earth unholy,
I must suffer this disgrace
To uplift the human race
  Out of woes distressing;

I must suffer want and pain
To enrich your race, and gain
Everlasting blessing.*

Atavism, surely, is a more persistent thing than we commonly admit, and the centuries jostle one another with delightful *insouciance* up and down the paths of modern song and of modern life. Who can turn from the apostrophe of Abbot Mauburne, for instance, without thinking straightway upon Francis Thompson's

Little Jesus, wast Thou shy
Once, and just so small as I?
And what did it feel like to be
Out of Heaven and just like me?

As for Crashaw's chronology, one knows not how to compute it. Lineal descendant he was indubitably of the saintly Benno, with a family resemblance to the little group of Flemish primitives who sang their love-songs upon canvas. There was more than a dash of Italy, too, in his make-up—of Masaccio and the early Florentines, passionately sensuous, passionately devout, not yet passionately sophisticated!—and more than a draught of Spain. The most improbable thing of all was that he should so gayly have "led Poetry bound back to Heaven's gates" in the teeth of Cromwell's army! But such are the

* Translated by the Hon. D. J. Donahue in his *Early Christian Hymns.*

ironies—or may one not better say, the immortalities?—of music. How Crashaw's lyrical shepherds met "Love's noon in Nature's night" ought, for true appreciation, to be read *in toto;* but since their hymn is a trifle long and not entirely obvious, this fragment may be stolen:

Poor World (said I) what wilt thou doe
To entertain this starry Stranger?
Is this the best thou canst bestow,
A cold, and not too cleanly, manger?

* * * * *

I saw the curl'd drops, soft and slow,
Come hovering o'er the place's head;
Offering their whitest sheets of snow
To furnish the fair Infant's bed:
Forbear, said I; be not too bold,
Your fleece is white, but 'tis too cold.

I saw the obsequious Seraphims
Their rosy fleece of fire bestow,
For well they now can spare their wing
Since Heav'n itself lyes here below.
Well done, said I: but are you sure
Your down so warm will pass for pure?

No, no, your King's not yet to seeke
Where to repose his royall Head.
See, see, how soon his new-bloom'd Cheek
'Twixt mother's breasts is gone to bed.
Sweet choise, said we! No way but so
Not to ly cold, yet sleep in snow!

It is one of the sweetest Christmas hymns in existence, and it illustrates perfectly the warm and fond familiarity which (even in England) has been a distinguishing note of Catholic poetry. It is not, for the most part, reverent: it is devout. For reverence implies something of the "dread and fear of kings"; it is a chilly and formal virtue, when all is said—a virtue of the serf or the self-conscious official rather than the son. John Milton was reverent, far more reverent than he was religious. It opens up a curious and suggestive paradox to turn back from the "divine familiarity" of the loyalist Crashaw to the royalist formality of the austere (and republican!) Milton's hymn *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity.* It is a beautiful ode: as beautiful and as frigid as a marble frieze, with its sonorous pageant of the "helmèd cherubim" and "swordèd seraphim," and its somewhat more approachable classic divinities. But is there anything the heart wants less to listen to, in the tender expectancy of Christmas Eve, than this rhetoric of the "dreaded Infant," stretching out His baby hands to strike the old pagan cults, while

> all about the courtly stable
> Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable . . .?

It is only *love* that *casts out fear,* taking for granted all the bright and manifold surprises which follow

upon the Incarnation. She holds them close, and dreams and laughs and makes them quite her own. . . . Perhaps it is through the much sacramentalism of Catholicity that her children in all climes have acquired something of this intimacy—a thing the poets have always loved, and the Puritans and other Philistines as invariably detested.

Coleridge caught the fine infection whenever he stepped into the Virgin's precincts, and he has left us a little *Nativity* which should not be forgotten. His *Christmas Carol,* on the contrary, is a rather uninspired piece of writing, mainly because the carol was so manifestly not his proper *métier.* And then, he seems never to have penetrated very felicitously into the heart of childhood. But he felt, and transmitted well, the thrill of the Divine Humanness when he mused of her, the Mary of Bethlehem—

> Blessèd, blessèd, for she lay
> With such a babe in one blest bed,
> Close as babes and mothers lie!

This self-same strain may be called the keynote of our countless Christmas lullabies; most of which hark back for inspiration to the anonymous Latin *Dormi, Fili, Dormi,* and one of which is universally known in the brooding beauty of Barnaby's music.

Within recent years much of the best of this "realistic" Christmas poetry has been written by women. Mrs. Hinkson has sung the strain sweetly

and blithely, Mrs. Eden sweetly and pensively. But Mrs. Browning sang it sweetly and sadly! No one, indeed, could quarrel with the tenderness of the latter's *Virgin Mary to the Child Jesus;* although a Catholic critic might well quarrel with certain speeches following naturally enough from a denial of the Immaculate Conception. But never so *triste* a Madonna as she who bends over her Jesus "of aspect very sorrowful," her "child without the heart for play," whose little lips have never once curled in smiling kisses! Somewhere in space stretches the delicate and dangerous frontier between sentience—sentiment—and sentimentality. There are no white lights of warning, no visible and conspicuous outposts. The balance lies midway between head and heart. But to cross the barrier is for art (perhaps, also, for life?) to pass from soundness to morbidity.

A far braver and better music than this colloquy of Mrs. Browning's rings in the Christmas carols of our own Louise Imogen Guiney. Here is one of the fairest of them—one of the rarest, alike in its fancy and its pathos:

Still as blowing rose, sudden as a sword,
Maidenly the Maiden bare Jesu Christ the Lord;
Yet for very lowlihood, such a Guest to greet,
Goeth in a little swoon while kissing of His feet.

Mary, drifted snow on the earthen floor.
Joseph, fallen wondrous weak now he would adore—

(Oh, the surging might of love! Oh, the drowning bliss!)
Both are rapt to Heaven, and lose their human Heaven that is.

From the Newly Born trails a lonely cry.
With a mind to heed, the Ox turns a glowing eye;
In the empty byre the Ass thinks her heart to blame:
Up for comforting of God the beasts of burden came,

Softly to inquire, thrusting as for cheer
There between the tender hands, furry faces dear.
Blessing on the honest coats! tawny coat and grey
Friended our Delight so well when warmth had strayed away.

* * * * *

The Ox and the Ass,
Be you glad for them
Such a moment came to pass
In Bethlehem!

It is interesting to set over against this poetry of sentiment and devotion, the *Merry Christmas* verses—the ballads, glees and carols for which England was one time famous. Here the ancient pagan strain, the praise of yule-log and boar's head and foaming ale, leaped to the fore, albeit duly baptized and chrismèd. The earlier carols, indeed—the Norman-English songs, the "Welcome be Thou, Hevene King" of Henry VI's reign, the "God rest you, merry gentlemen"—are emphatically pious of inten-

tion. But, for the most part, these convivial songs were in high favor about the time men had grown to take the spiritual Christmas very much for granted. Everyone remembers the hilarious opening of George Wither's famous lines, first printed some six years after Shakespeare's death, but undoubtedly sung before:

So now is come our joyfulst feast,
Let every man be jolly,
Each room with ivy leaves is drest
And every post with holly.

* * * * *

Without the door let sorrow lye;
And if for cold it hap to die,
We'll bury it in a Christmas pie
And evermore be merry!

After all, good cheer and good will may justly enough be called a human corollary of the divine Nativity; how justly is shown by this gracious excerpt from *Poor Robin's Almanac:*

Now that the time is come wherein
Our Saviour Christ was born,
The larders full of beef and pork,
The garners fill'd with corn;
As God hath plenty to thee sent,
Take comfort of thy labours,
And let it never thee repent
To feast thy needy neighbours!

These carols of "Merrie England" might very well claim a paper all their own. Boisterous they were at moments, delicious at other moments; with something of the forest in them and more of the kitchen. Poetically they were seldom to be taken *au grand serieux*, but humanly they did—and irresistibly do—appeal to the eternal boyhood of the world. And if we fancy them dead, let us look to our modern "Christmas cards" before ringing the bell for their mirthful passing. In these popular pasteboards the secular carol survives most effectually. It prevails too often, alas! over all the higher poetry of Christmas.

Like the great feast itself, this poetry of Noël is a many-sided thing: and it is well that here, as elsewhere, man should "fulfill himself in many ways." We ourselves are witnessing a revival, under new conditions, of the old religious drama. Scarcely two decades back the English censor banished from the London theatre one of the most beautiful and most reverent of modern Nativity plays, the *Bethlehem* of Laurence Housman. It was very Catholic in thought and feeling; it was vivid and simple and poetic. To be sure, the sublimity of the theme was imperfectly realized—it was not even attempted. The shepherds talked provincial English and the Magi recited *Aves*. This conscious naïveté was the pervading charm of *Bethlehem*. In Mr. Housman's own words, here was no attempt at a "naturalistic or

realistic" version of the Navitity, but an effort to concentrate into symbolic drama "all the love and delight and wonder which have come to be associated with Christmas."

This, the symbolic treatment, will be perhaps the final expression of Christmas poetry. It is not new (nothing seems ever to be new!) it is at least as old as the visions of the saints. Like Raphael, it laughs at chronology. It is personal, but no longer realistic. Father Southwell's celebrated lyric was precisely of this type: how much of Bethlehem was there in *The Burning Babe?*

As I in hoary Winter's night stood shivering in the snow,
Surpris'd I was with sudden heat, which made my heart to glow;
And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,
A pretty Babe, all burning bright, did in the air appear . . .
et cetera.

Beside this ardent Elizabethan colloquy, one likes to place the cool greenness of a modern Celtic *Christ Child*—John Todhunter's:

The Christ Child came to my bed one night,
He came in tempest and thunder;
His presence woke me in sweet affright,
I trembled for joy and wonder;
He bore sedately His Christmas-tree,

It shone like a silver willow,
His grave child's eyes looked wistfully
As He laid a branch on my pillow.

And when He had left me alone, alone,
And all the house lay sleeping,
I planted it in a nook of my own,
And watered it with my weeping.
And there it strikes its roots in the earth,
And opens its leaves to heaven;
And when its blossoms have happy birth,
I shall know my sins forgiven.

This is the Christ Child, older than Bethlehem, younger than tomorrow, who lives still in His Church and His world. Father Tabb had visions of Him, through his blindness in the Southland: not only the blithe vision which he crystallized in his *Out of Bounds,* but another which one can but guess from his stabbing little prayer—

Let my heart the cradle be
Of Thy bleak Nativity!
Tossed by wintry tempests wild,
If it rock Thee, Holy Child,
Then, as grows the outer din,
Greater peace shall reign within.

And through that other blindness of eyes smarting from the smoke and tears of war, Joyce Kilmer saw Him, too:

The kings of the earth are men of might,
And cities are burned for their delight,
And the skies rain death in the silent night,
And the hills belch death all day!
But the King of Heaven, who made them all,
Is fair and gentle, and very small;
He lies in the straw, by the oxen's stall—
Let them think of Him today!

Today . . . when the new Christian reaction is shouting all through our literature its challenge, not to the half-faith of yesterday, but to its one true adversary and antithesis, the unfaith of tomorrow!

Oh, we have learnt to peer and pore
On tortured puzzles from our youth,
We know all labyrinthine lore,
We are the three wise men of yore,
And we know all things but the truth,

confesses the conquered Chesterton—as in another voice the conquered and inspired Papini confesses, too. And then the British paladin, knight of all generous girth and gallantry, gives us his other stanzas fairly thrilling with the passionate peace and unshakable reality of the old recaptured Faith:

Go humbly . . . it has hailed and snowed . . .
With voices low and lanterns lit;
So very simple is the road
That we may stray from it.

The world grows terrible and white,
  And blinding white the breaking day;
We walk bewildered in the light,
For something is too large for sight,
  And something much too plain to say.

The Child that was ere worlds begun
  (. . . We need but walk a little way,
We need but see a latch undone . . .)
The Child that played with moon and sun
  Is playing with a little hay.
The house from which the heavens are fed,
  The old strange house that is our own,
Where tricks of words are never said,
  And Mercy is as plain as bread,
    And Honour is as hard as stone.

* * * * *

Hark! Laughter like a lion wakes
  To roar to the resounding plain,
And the whole heaven shouts and shakes,
  For God Himself is born again,
And we are little children walking
  Through the snow and rain.

The verses leave us—poor, sophisticated "little children" that we are!—with a catch in the throat. Scarcely less poignant and, ironically enough, even more peaceful are the Christmas carols of the militant Mr. Hilaire Belloc—"fit to be sung by a chorus of children," as Joyce Kilmer declared when he sought and found for them the word of superlative praise. Not easily, for all the distractions of this busy world, can we forget the refrain of his *Noël:*

It was very, very cold when our Lord was born.
And the small child Jesus smile on you!

Again, in the lovely bi-lingual ballads which Helen Parry Eden has given us, one catches a most characteristic blending of medieval enchantment and modern disenchantment. Here is her *Carol of a Hard Christmas:*

Winter is come with snow like wool
On all that was so beautiful,
And rime is scattered ashen-grey
On all the grace of yesterday,
In specie hesterna;
The bower most bright of turf and bough
Is but a den of brushwood now,
Yet Jesse's stem,
In Bethlehem,
Its diadem hath re-assumed,
A Flower more sweet than ever bloomed
In die verna.

The world is dark and full of doubt,
The lamps of sin are soon put out,
And they who lit them, in a trice
Departed to their destinies,
In puncto ad inferna;
The stars are dim, the roads are foul,
Bewildered strays the weary soul,
Yet see! a ray
Doth shew the way,
For mortal clay is made to-night
The lantern of the One True Light,
Carnis lucerna.

Now little wealth is to be won,
And bare goes many a good man's son,
And closed is many a merry door,
And all is scarcer than before
In die hodierna;
But whoso hath the least to spend
May fare the better in the end,
If he but know
That Portal low
Wherethrough lies open to our eyes
God's bliss, and all his braveries,
Vita æterna.

Even so far has the little Christ Child travelled, up and down the songs of so many centuries at least nominally His. They are harmonies upon diverse themes, but He is their unity. And this is the eternal Christmas message—the oft-repeated Incarnation: Love, Joy, Youth, reborn every time the Christmas crescent swings like a silver cradle high up in the December skies! Let the last word be spoken by that rarest of poet-mothers, Alice Meynell, in *Unto Us a Son Is Given:*

Given, not lent,
And not withdrawn—once sent,
This Infant of mankind, this One
Is still the little welcome Son.

New every year,
New born and newly dear,
He comes with tidings and a song,
The ages long, the ages long;

Even as the cold
Keen winter grows not old,
As childhood is so fresh, foreseen,
And spring in the familiar green.

Sudden as sweet
Come the expected feet.
All joy is young, and new all art,
And He, too, Whom we have by heart.

ERNEST DOWSON: AN INTERPRETATION

The wisdom of the world said unto me:
"Go forth and run, the race is to the brave;
Perchance some honor tarrieth for thee!"
"As tarrieth," I said, "for sure the grave."
—DOWSON: *Sapientia Lunæ.*

IT IS to be doubted if really happy people are ever very thoroughgoing esthetes. That fine and hungry and never-to-be-gainsaid quest of beauty —the "nostalgia," as Fiona MacLeod called it, "for sweet, impossible things"—at first perhaps an instinct, at the last emphatically a cult, is rather an escape from life as men too commonly know it. It is a protest against and a denial of what we call *realism.* And very happy people, like very healthy people, ("comfortable men," in the poet's words), have small sympathy with any such protest. But if the esthete be not happy himself, he adds none the less to the ultimate happiness of others. More highly sensitized to pain alike and pleasure, he blazes the trail where they shall follow. There is even a sublimated estheticism discoverable in many of the saints and mystics; in the joyous abandon of St.

Francis' *Canticle of the Sun,* or in St. Gertrude offering to her divine Spouse the delight she found in a bunch of luscious grapes *during Lent!*

Whenever life grows a little tight, a little grey, one of two things is imminent—a wave of laxity or a wave of estheticism. Only the crude mind will confuse these two, in spite of certain superficial resemblances. For as everlasting exemplars, we have the thirteenth century on one side, on the other, the Renaissance; we have the English Restoration period, and for Mid-Victorian England the new discovery of beauty. Ruskin and William Morris had felt passionately the machine-made ugliness around them: then came the young enthusiasts to whom this new awakening meant a crusade! Some followed the Pre-Raphaelites, some the sunflower or the peacock, some the Celtic revival—these men always a little pagan, but often more than a little Catholic as well. Walter Pater is perhaps the typical protagonist: Lionel Johnson's "unforgetably most gracious friend," who influenced a whole generation of Oxford students, and who left—along with the stimulating if perilous mandate to crowd as many great passions as possible into our fleeting hours—at least two maxims worthy of immortality. The first defines the perfection of culture as "not rebellion but peace." The second bids us, for really great harvesting, "treat life in the spirit of art"—never *vice versa.*

But the march went on beyond Pater. Wilde came, hovering always between the great artist and the great poseur; rising to the summit of even popular acclaim, sinking to the easier abyss of popular obloquy. Arthur Symons was of the band, lover of Renaissance lore, of old streets and gardens, and of the rhythmic ballet. There was Aubrey Beardsley, the delicate, bizarre, sensuous, cryptic Beardsley. And of them, too, their friend, their co-worker, and more than most their co-sufferer, was Ernest Dowson.

He has been scarcely remembered. He was not, as Beardsley was to so amazing a degree, vivid in his exoticism. Child he was, and singer also, of the twilight dusk. In the happier moments, fireflies lighted his way; or he lay dreaming quietly, like his own Pierrot, in the white, subdued radiance of the moon. The waking hours held the real darkness, and theirs were the blacker dreams. It is easy, of course, to strain sentimentalities too far: but for those who know the story well, it is scarcely possible to picture the Dowson of the last decade walking cheerily along a sunlit road at noontime! And having said that, one has implied all the frailty, the abnormality and aloofness of his sad life; all the exquisite remote grace, the enmity to obvious things, the weariness and pastel perfection of his work in literature.

Ernest Christopher Dowson was gently born and

even delicately bred. His great uncle was a man of letters and the friend of literary men—Alfred Domett, for a while Prime Minister of New Zealand. His father was an amateur of books and an invalid. At the time of Ernest's birth, the second of August, 1867, the family was living in Kent; but much of the boy's youth was spent in Italy and France, because of the perpetual mandate by which his father was "ordered south." Hence it happened that Ernest grew up in beautiful, semi-tropical countries; in particular strips of country where there was much leisure, much interest in all expressions of sensuous loveliness, and a certain forced detachment from humdrum workaday life. He read much and studied desultorily. He was familiar with the classics, and—of course!—with the modern French schools of Beaudelaire and Verlaine. It would seem that the only "regular" period of Dowson's education was the few years spent at Queen's College, Oxford; and even this regularity was not without detours into the hectic youthful world of hashish, day-dreams and nocturnal revellings. Dowson left Oxford without taking his degree (he was then but twenty years old), and divided the remaining twelve and a half years of his life between London and his *"cher pays de la France."* The fragmentary facts of this later career we owe mainly to the pen of Mr. Arthur Symons, whose little intimate memoir (written shortly after his friend's death) is still

the best analysis of the poet's genius and personality.* "I cannot remember my first meeting with Ernest Dowson," he tells us. "It may have been in 1891, at one of the meetings of the Rhymers' Club, in an upper room of the 'Cheshire Cheese,' where long clay pipes lay in slim heaps on the wooden tables, between tankards of ale; and young poets, then very young, recited their own verses to one another with a desperate and ineffectual attempt to get into key with the Latin Quarter." Ernest, who had "enjoyed the real thing so much in Paris," did not, apparently, frequent many of these amiable hothouse conferences; but to the first published volume of this Rhymers' Club, he contributed poems notable even among such notable companions as Lionel Johnson's lines upon *King Charles' Statue at Charing Cross.* One of Dowson's most powerful and perfect lyrics, the *Cynara* lament, appeared that same early year (1891) in another exotic publication, the *Century Guild Hobby Horse.* He has left nothing more finished nor more arresting than this youthful creation; the posthumous poems are only less fresh, scarcely ever more mature, in their artistry. His was a genius which knew little development; like many another highly concentrated personality, it would seem to have sprung to birth fully armed and caparisoned. All his decisions

* The impressionistic and journalistic "reminiscences" subsequently put together by Victor Plarr do not, on the whole, reverse this verdict.

were reached early—not one of his sentiments was outgrown. Indeed, there was a curious integrity in that simple yet sophisticated nature. One cannot conceive of him as a really innocent child nor as a really experienced man, but always as the youth —stung by exquisite dreams, hand-tied in the grip of sordid and insistent realities.

Shortly after leaving Oxford, Ernest Dowson was received into the Catholic Church. It was a step which could have surprised very few of his circle. Not at the height of the Oxford Movement was Rome more regnant over poetic England than during those curious early 90's. Patmore, Francis Thompson, Alice Meynell—London still held these. From Oxford came the young group which had grown up about Pater: Lionel Johnson, who was received in 1891; and Beardsley, who accepted the sublime convention of Catholicity just as he was beginning, in his art, to accept the "convention of nature," all too close to his death, in 1898.

The artistic side of the Church was, indeed, much the vogue amongst these young Oxonian esthetes. They were intoxicated with incense; even those who did not take Catholicity to their hearts, toyed with her—and got themselves most delightfully satirized in Lionel Johnson's "Cultured Faun." But this is not to imply that Dowson toyed. It is the unique agreement of all who knew him that he was never insincere; that through a thousand seeming contradic-

tions he maintained a delicate permanence and unity of spirit. Not that he claimed—frail, sweet-tongued vagrant of the Breton coast and London streets!—to live a consistently Catholic life. Ernest Dowson made no humblest pretense of consistency in anything; and that, perhaps, is why no sensible person could accuse him of contradicting himself. But to his striving, stumbling pilgrimage, Faith was, none the less, the candle set upon a hill.

He had, too, his little love story: a story of what Mr. Symons has called "the most exquisite and appropriate impossibility"; not the less fatal and final because it was sketched in pastel colors. The girl was of French extraction, the daughter of a poor but not ill-born *emigré* who had set up a restaurant in some out of the way corner of London. Dowson dined there every evening; after dinner he had his game of cards with *mademoiselle,* while *Madame la mère* sat by. They were the only happy hours, it would seem, in the brief tragedy of his later life; wistful, half-silent hours distributed over some two years. *Eh bien*—this little ideal romance of the shy modern Dante did not appeal to the thrifty French mother. So one day *mademoiselle* became in her own turn *madame,* a marriage having been arranged between Dowson's Beatrice and the waiter at her father's restaurant! Ernest did not rant. He did not fight for the joy he had never really considered his own. He seems to have expected, from the

very first, that it would be taken away from him. Only, he plunged more deeply into that strange, bitter sea of dissipation which had already become his sea of forgetfulness. But the seal of that early, unfulfilled love was upon his life and upon his verse sacramentally, for better, for worse. *Mademoiselle* (let us forget if we can, *the mariage de convenance!*) was set up like a Virgin above his altar forevermore. Very gently, very reverently, he wrote of her:

I would not alter thy cold eyes
With trouble of the human heart;
Within their glance my spirit lies,
A frozen thing, alone, apart;
I would not alter thy cold eyes.

And in a still more poignant poem, *Amor Umbratilis,* the renouncement goes a step further:

I have no songs to sing,
That you should heed or know:
I have no lilies, in full hands, to fling
Across the path you go.

* * *

I watch you pass and pass,
Serene and cold; I lay
My lips upon your trodden, daisied grass,
And turn my life away.
Yea, for I cast you, sweet!
This one gift you shall take;
Like ointment, on your unobservant feet,
My silence, for your sake.

It was an early poem, quietly sung; but of the quietness which survives many tempests. Later, in *Impenitentia Ultima,* there flamed a different mood of love—since love, surely, has many moods, and may be fierce or fine or tender with equal truth. Here we have Dowson's challenge to fate and time and death and change, his ultimatum to Almighty God Himself—all the more arresting because the poet dealt so little in ultimates or challenges. The "virilists" have pronounced him, with small mincing of words, a weakling; well, it is not weak to ask one grand passion of life, and then to pay the price. It may be foolish and it may be futile, but it is not weak! Let the stanzas sing for themselves:

Before my light goes out forever, if God should
give me a choice of graces,
I would not reck of length of days, nor crave for
things to be;
But cry: "One day of the great lost days, one face
of all the faces,
Grant me to see and touch once more and nothing
more to see.

* * * *

"But once before the sand is run and the silver
thread is broken,
Give me a grace and cast aside the veil of
dolorous years,
Grant me one hour of all mine hours, and let me see
for a token
Her pure and pitiful eyes shine out and bathe her
feet with tears."

Her pitiful hands should calm, and her hair stream
down and blind me,
Out of the sight of night, and out of the reach
of fear,
And her eyes should be my light whilst the sun went
out behind me,
And the viols in her voice be the last sound in
my ear.
Before the running waters fall and my life be car-
ried under,
And thine anger cleave me through as a child
cuts down a flower,
I will praise Thee, Lord, in hell, while my limbs are
racked asunder,
For the last sad sight of her face and the little
grace of an hour.

One more love poem, this time a profession of faith, and we are done for the present. The publication of *De Amore* did not come until after Dowson's death, but all that was best, highest, most steadfast in his soul soared into it. It would not be true (although it would be easy!) to picture Ernest Dowson as a poet of one single emotion; that is never quite true of any poet. But one would not go far amiss in remembering him as the poet of a single vitalizing passion. Driven by that wind alone, his fragile sail made boldly across the unplumbed sea. Now the touchstone of all love lies, obviously, in the things we count "well lost" for it—in the number of years which seem as one year when we are serving it. Suffering, *cheerfully* borne, is the

ultimate test of artist, lover and saint alike. The poet we have been considering had his sincerely spiritual moments, and he wrote of them with a sad and reverent conviction. He had also, it would seem, his sincerely carnal moments; but when he wrote of these, it was with a forced gaiety that is without conviction. But it is notable that in only one poem has he accepted loss high-heartedly, and acknowledged the ministry of pain. And for this reason, *De Amore* registers the high-water mark of his passionate inspiration. It is a praise of love unfulfilled, unreturned, uncrowned by all "the certain peace which happier lovers know." It sings, almost as a Middle Age troubadour might have sung, the pride of the servitor who asks no guerdon in the Court of Love:

Grows not the world to him a fairer place,
How far soever his days
Pass from his lady's ways,
From mere encounter with her golden face?

* * * *

Is she not still a star,
Deeply to be desired, worshipped afar,
A beacon-light to aid
From bitter-sweet delights, Love's masquerade?
Though he lose many things,
Though much he miss;
The heart upon his heart, the hand that clings,
The memorable first kiss;
Love that is love at all,
Needs not an earthly coronal;

Love is himself his own exceeding great reward,
A mighty lord!
Lord over life and all the ways of breath,
Mighty and strong to save
From the devouring grave;
Yea, whose dominion doth out-tyrant death,
Thou who art life and death in one,
The night, the sun;
Who art, when all things seem:
Foiled, frustrate and forlorn, rejected of to-day,
Go with me all my way,
And let me not blaspheme.

There had been his moments of blasphemy—his turnings aside, often enough, to bitter-sweet delights. Indeed, it spells folly and the obscuring of values to deny the degradation of our poet's final years. He was drinking almost to madness. He haunted the docks and market places, alternately quarreling and consorting with strangely squalid bedfellows. He fled, it would seem, from all the delicate ideals which had failed him or which he had failed. Having broken his viol in the midst, he took solace in discord. There was never any "half world" for Ernest Dowson: there was only Elysium —or the underworld! Even in his dear Gallic lands, where vice itself has learned to go daintily vestured, he would have none of its daintiness. So it came about that an exquisite poet died at the cottage of a bricklayer in the impossible suburb of Catford. He had been talking feverishly to the one friend

whose care and charity had followed him. All night he had talked, of the future, of new beginnings. Then came the tell-tale cough, and the sudden swoon which ended his struggle. It was upon the twenty-third of February, 1900, that Ernest Dowson passed to the judgment seat of God, who was his Father. Four days later the Church whom he had not failed to claim for Mother, laid the broken body in consecrated ground, and followed the bruised soul with her pitiful, asperging prayers.

So much for the eternal mercy. But in the eternal justice of things, Dowson must go down to history as a literary decadent. Never as a literary degenerate—that would be a cruel and false arraignment! Decadent art is not yet corrupt or corrupting. It is a tired art, pale or feverish: too tired to work its fine dreams into any approach toward a fine reality; too tired to fight, to reconcile inconsistencies, to pierce through the obvious smoke of conflict that it may, in Francis Thompson's fine words, "see and restore the Divine idea of things." But none the less, it has its moods of beauty. If it be art at all, it captures something of the multitudinous vision and experience of man. In Ernest Dowson's work the memorable moods, the moods most perfectly and poignantly expressed, are *delicacy* and *disenchantment*. They are not the robust or heroic virtues of literature; none the less one takes them for such

as they are. There was an almost infinite delicacy in Dowson's viewpoint and in his simple yet subtle craftsmanship; a sympathetic delight in all delicate things—in clouds, and childhood, and the white hands of women; in the whimsical Pierrot, and the silent peace of old churches huddling close upon some crowded street. Often he chose quaint French forms for the expression of these aloof beauties; a villanelle of sunset, a rondeau to Manon, a refrain of love or sorrow or farewell. Not one of his contemporaries (not even the delectable Austin Dobson!) knew better how to use the airy and archaic beauty of these delicate verse forms. But where Dobson used them for blitheness, the younger, sadder Dowson made them serve a haunting and persistent melancholy. It is the saving grace of the poet's sometimes morbid outlook, of his often excessive sense of tragedy, that he never tore a passion to tatters. What shall one point to in its kind more gracious, more eloquent of suggested, unspoken things, than the lines *Ad Domnulam Suam,* beginning:

Little lady of my heart!
Just a little longer
Love me; we will pass and part
Ere this love grow stronger.

Then there is the fine restraint of his *Valediction:*

If we must part,
  Then let it be like this;
Not heart on heart,
  Nor with the useless anguish of a kiss;
But touch mine hand and say:
  Until to-morrow or some other day,
  If we must part!

Perhaps the most deliciously delicate of all is the little fantastic comedy published in 1897, *The Pierrot of the Minute.* It is like nothing so much as a white butterfly in the gardens of Versailles; always supposing that butterflies sojourning in the neighborhood of the Trianons should flutter to the music of a gently whimsical irony, as well as a gently whimsical tenderness!

As for the poems of disenchantment, their name is legion. Here also delicacy prevails, but it is the ominous autumnal delicacy of fair things nearing death. Scarcely half a score of times do the verses reach the sinister power of *Bedlam;* only once or twice does their hopelessness quite darken the sun. For the most part they are the songs of a heartsick boy—

> Not sorrowful, but only tired
> Of everything that ever he desired!

He is tired of love and of life, since he has rubbed the freshness from both of these; tired of beauty and of work; tired of body and of spirit, and of all

the brave things he has abused. There was never anything more insidiously weary than these plaints of Ernest Dowson. They weigh us down with their suffocating sense of dissolution. The pages teem with requiems, vesperals, farewells, and salutations to "death, the host of all our golden dreams." Edgar Poe, also, had this preoccupation with the Valley of the Shadow; a preoccupation which may fairly be described as one hallmark of the decadent genius. There is, indeed, something in Dowson's poetry and more in his prose to suggest the work of Poe: but the young Englishman's touch—perhaps because of his intimacy with the French Symbolists —is more refined because more restrained. The prose sketches, which he himself loved better than his poems, could be gathered easily into a single volume no stouter than the single volume of his collected verse. A few of the best were first published in the beautiful adventure of the *Savoy Magazine*— others in a book called *Dilemmas*—while with Mr. Arthur Moore he shared responsibility for two novels. The stories themselves are slight things, meticulously observed, deeply meditated, sometimes witty and always fastidious in their expression. Often, as in *Eyes of Pride* or *Countess Marie of the Angels,* they tell a little sophisticated love story —always ending unhappily. Or else, as in that extraordinary prose-poem, *The Visit,* and the better known *Dying of Francis Donne,* they are, like

many of the poems, studies in death. There is no denying their haunting quality; they smell of the grave; but—terrible as they are—they stop short of the horror of Poe's post-mortem colloquies. One almost forgives the morbidness of the theme throughout *Francis Donne,* for the delicate artistry and realism of its closing pages:

"He opened his eyes and seemed to discern a few blurred figures against the darkness of the closed shutters through which one broad ray filtered in; but he could not distinguish their faces, and he closed his eyes once more. An immense and ineffable tiredness had come over him, but the pain—oh, miracle! had ceased. . . . And it suddenly flashed over him that this—*this* was Death; this was the thing against which he had cried and revolted . . . this utter luxury of physical exhaustion, this calm, this release. The corporal capacity of smiling had passed from him, but he would fain have smiled.

"And for a few moments of singular mental lucidity, all his life flashed before him in a new relief: his childhood, his adolescence, the people whom he had known; his mother who had died when he was a boy . . . the friend of his youth who had shot himself for so little reason, the girl whom he had loved, but who had not loved him . . . and then the great tiredness swept over him once more, and a fainter consciousness, in which he could yet just dimly hear, as in a dream, the sound of Latin prayers, and feel the application of the oils upon all the issues and approaches of his wearied sense; then utter unconsciousness, while pulse and heart

gradually grew fainter until both ceased. And that was all."

So much for the "esthetic" treatment of physical death. It could scarcely be better done—although one may think what one likes about the utility of doing it at all. Personally, one may have an entirely vulgar *penchant* for life and laughter and God's sunshine. That is beside the point. . . . Moreover, the poet has forestalled any such banal criticism. He was French not only in form, but in the logic and sequence of his thought. The remote, Horatian melancholy of his early work deepened as time wore on, until, upon the last page of his posthumous *Decorations,* we meet one of the bitterest cries in modern literature. It is a terrible arraignment of decadent art and life, the self-arraignment less of a man than of a school.

We cannot understand
Laughter or tears, for we have only known
Surpassing vanity,

muses the poet; and then, with sudden anguish,

Twine our torn hands! O pray the earth enfold
Our life-sick hearts and turn them into dust!

Such words out-preach the preacher and leave the moralist dumb. Surely, for such as Dowson, life has become its own exceeding great regret!

But after all, there is no defiance, very little *diablerie* in all this disenchantment. It was less a conviction than a sentiment with Ernest Dowson: the sentiment of a tired boy, a rejected lover, a runner who had lost the race. Perhaps its chief evil is that it vitiates the rest of his work. Critics (severe critics who are fond of checker-board definitions!) insist upon asking whether the devotional strain, also, were less a conviction than a sentiment? Doubtless, it was both—nothing in human nature being quite so simple as the checker-board philosophers would pretend. There is, in truth, the best of all reasons for believing in the sincerity of Dowson's religious poems. They express exactly the sort of religious emotion most native to what we (none too kindly) call inefficient people. *Lord, I believe—help Thou mine unbelief!* That is the one prayer open to no charge of hypocrisy; and it is the cry which trembles upon our poet's lips when he kneels for Benediction before the altar "dressed like a bride, illustrious with light," or sings the praises of Carmel, or kisses (as Villon might have kissed!) the habit of the austere Carthusian. To each poet his own sacrament! To Patmore the mystic chant of Bride and Bridegroom—to Francis Thompson the pageant of the sun-bright Eucharist —but to Dowson, meetly enough, the sacrament of death and the dying, Extreme Unction. His song

of it should be better remembered by Catholic anthologists: there is scarcely another page of his work more simply dramatic in its appeal. Yet even higher is the strain throughout *Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration*—a thing of almost sculptural beauty, which, if it had not come to us from the hand of Ernest Dowson, we should perhaps have attributed to the convert-poet whose life ran so strangely parallel, that rare scholar and fine dreamer, Lionel Johnson:

Calm, sad, secure; behind high convent walls,
These watch the sacred lamp, these watch and pray;
And it is one with them when evening falls,
And one with them the cold return of day.
These heed not time; their night and days they make
Into a long returning rosary,
Whereon their lives are threaded for Christ's sake;
Meekness and vigilance and chastity.

* * * *

They saw the glory of the world displayed;
They saw the bitter of it and the sweet;
They knew the roses of the world should fade,
And be trod under by the hurrying feet.

Therefore they rather put away desire,
And crossed their hands and came to sanctuary,
And veiled their heads and put on coarse attire,
Because their comeliness was vanity.

* * * *

Calm, sad, secure; with faces worn and mild;
  Surely their choice of vigil is the best?
Yea! for our roses fade, the world is wild;
  But there, beside the altar, there, is rest.

By his friends, Dowson is said to have been the most reticent of men. His readers will scarcely find him so. It is true he was of those to whom the part is more than the whole—manifestly because the *part* can be seen with reasonable perfectness. It is true also that, knowing too well the riot of the unharnessed will, the realism of crude and ugly facts, he never for one moment permitted these to obtrude upon his work. He was all an esthete in the fastidious choice of his material. But how inalienably his own were the very delicacy, weariness, disenchantment we have found throughout his work: the paucity and perfection of it technically; and spiritually, that quivering hunger after purity and peace! Falling himself unnumbered times, Dowson never quite forgot the steadfast mountain-tops. If he could have forgotten, indeed, the loss would have been greater, but the heartbreak might have been less. We have spoken of him as the poet of a single passion—the passion of his hopeless love. But having the grace to be a poet, he transmuted this love into a symbol of all remote and inaccessible loveliness: of the Ideal which changes not (albeit *we* change!), of the spirit which *is* "when all things seem." And then, with that blending of vehement

self-revelation and baffling aloofness common to the artist of every age, he wrapped his symbol in the classic robe of *Cynara.* And at the feet of Cynara, thinking not at all of men's judgment, the young poet who was never to grow old laid that one surpassing lyric gift for which men have thanked and consented to remember him:

Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae

Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head;
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

* * * *

I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine;
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

If that tragic thing had not come from Ernest Dowson's hand, one feels instinctively that neither Johnson nor any other could have given it to the world. What if there should be gathered into those brief stanzas the faith, the wistfulness, the insufficiency of a whole life?

THE POETRY OF KATHARINE TYNAN HINKSON

THERE is something of the sweet prodigality of Nature in all that Mrs. Hinkson gives us; in her prose, alike critical and romantic, and not less in that poetic utterance which would seem to have gathered up and concentrated the beauty of her message. She differs as radically as may be from the abstinent, definitive speech of her long-time friend, Mrs. Meynell—there is nothing in her song of the silver remoteness, the classicism, the restraint of her well-loved Lionel Johnson. Like a torrent of sunshine falls her lyric speech, large and sweet and spontaneous; lighting up things great and humble with equal diligence. About her pages there is the lush and innocent luxuriance of summer fields and blowing wild flowers.

If it be not "to consider too curiously," the simile may be carried a step further. In the garden of Mrs. Hinkson's poetry it is quite possible to sort and sift the flowers—even to trace by their sequence the progress of her own seasons. First of all, back in 1885, came *Louise de la Vallière,* a first volume as like as possible to the pale sweet crocus of earliest

springtime. Everyone was writing narrative verse just then—Tennyson, Swinburne, Aubrey de Vere, William Morris—so, of course, it contained narratives. It was colorful, too, with something of the irised imagery of the Brotherhood; for was not the flame of Rossetti's genius but a few years extinguished, and still a vital thing to all the younger poets? The great day of Victorian poetry was just wearing to its sunset when this little Irish maiden stepped across the horizon of London town, her heart full of dreams, her lips of songs. Like most youthful songs they were shy, romantic, idealistic; tenderly but not fastidiously wrought, and preoccupied with the minor music of life. The title poem was a monologue of much grace and pathos—a midnight episode in the Carmelite convent where Louise,

> —a broken reed that He
> Hath bound with His strong fingers tenderly—

has sought her penitential peace. *Joan of Arc* again takes the monologue form, and the book holds a charming tale of King Cophetua's Beggar-Queen. A poem upon Thoreau gave prophecy of the Franciscan sympathies which have dominated so much of Katharine Tynan's later work: and there was already, in more than one poem, touches of that sweet and altogether reconciling comprehension of

death which has given largeness and serenity to her pages.

Two years after *Louise* came *Shamrocks,* a sister volume very like its predecessor, but greener and gladder; in a word, more Celtic. There was a charming legend of *The Sick Princess,* with ardent pre-Raphaelite coloring: there were Irish narratives, somewhat in de Vere's manner. But along with reminiscence there was the forward leap. In its *Angel of the Annunciation* one discerns the golden germ later to develop into the *Miracle Plays;* just as *The Heart of a Mother* anticipates that whole group of poems to cluster about the thought of the little dead child. And it is much to be doubted if any other than Katharine Tynan could have put into a gentle Franciscan sermon these characteristic bird stanzas:

Little flowers of air,
With your feathers soft and sleek,
And your bright brown eyes and meek,
He hath made you fair!

He hath taught to you
Skill to weave in tree and thatch
Nests where happy mothers hatch
Speckled eggs of blue. . . .

The garden had even more emphatically found itself when *Ballads and Lyrics* blossomed three years later, and to the early crocus and shamrock there

was added a hedge of hawthorne, blithe and sweet. It gave us the last of the long Irish narratives in the stirring tales of the Children of Lir and Connla of the Golden Hair. And it gave us the first of those delicious verse *apologias* which Mrs. Hinkson's readers have learned to expect by way of introduction—as also that little trick of repetition and the refrain which she has used so refreshingly. Nowhere is it more plaintive nor more persistent than in the now familiar *April* lyric:

All in the April evening,
  April airs were abroad:
The sheep with their little lambs
  Passed by me on the road.

The sheep with their little lambs
  Passed by me on the road:
All in the April evening
  I thought on the Lamb of God.

The lambs were weary and crying
  With a weak, human cry;
I thought on the Lamb of God,
  Going meekly to die.

Up in the blue, blue mountains,
  Dewy pastures are sweet;
Rest for the little bodies,
  Rest for the little feet.

But for the Lamb of God,
  Up on the hill top green,

Only a cross of shame,
Two stark crosses between.

All in the April evening,
April airs were abroad,
I saw the sheep with their lambs,
And thought on the Lamb of God.

In that, one comes upon the strain which Mrs. Hinkson's friends will like to label the essential Katharinian!

So much for the lyrics, which were beginning to take major hold upon this garden of verse. But the *Countess Cathleen* was a very different sort of ballad, built about that curious legend which William Butler Yeats later put into dramatic form. To handle with any sort of *vraisemblance* this tale of the woman who sells her own soul to the demon merchants to save her people from famine, would seem a feat of peculiar difficulty. It is a more mystical version of the *Monna Vanna* problem—with something of *Faust* to boot. But it has proved immensely stimulating to the poets. When Katharine Tynan pictured her Cathleen going from the palace,

With her white soul in her hand,
Fair beyond desires,
And her eyes like those who stand
In eternal fires,

she achieved one of her most poignant passages: and it is interesting to note how many of Mr. Yeats' really great lines were called into being by the same theme.

The first age of the garden was done when the hawthorne of *Ballads and Lyrics* had blossomed white and pink. For with *Cuckoo Songs* (1894) the warm sweetness of the lilac is felt—the lilac flowers which link together the late virginity of spring and the fresh motherhood of early summer. There were lovely bird notes here also: one cuckoo song so piercingly sweet that Katharine Tynan ought never to have written of the cuckoo again. There were charming renderings of the legends of Brother Ronan and his Birds, of Blessed Columba and his Horse; there was a brave ballad of Geoffrey Barron, and a tragically beautiful legend of *Our Lady of Pity*—at root the same legend which Heine has used so arrestingly in his *Pilgrimage of Kevlaar*. A lovely little miracle play of the Resurrection proved exceedingly prophetic in matter and metre of the volume next to come. And with all this, there was a noticeable deepening of the personal note. To Katharine Tynan (or as she had now become, Mrs. Henry Albert Hinkson) there had come a new power of self-expression and of soul-expression.

In the main, and all along, this has been most successful in concrete forms. *God's Bird* is both noble and tender; but most readers will recognize in

House and Home a rather unique combination of "the dream and the business," and a very convincing piece of feminine (if not "feminist") psychology:

Where is the house, the house we love?
  By field or river, square or street,
The house our hearts go dreaming of,
  That lonely waits our hurrying feet;
The house to which we come, we come,
To make that happy house our home.
Is it under grey London skies?
  Or somewhere hid, in fields and trees,
With gardens where a musk wind sighs,
  Or one brown plot to grow heartsease?

* * * *

O dear dream-house, for you I store
  A medley of such curious things
As a wise thrush goes counting o'er,
  Ere the glad moon of songs and wings,
When a small nest makes all her heaven,
And a true mate that sings at even.
Up those dim stairs my heart will steal,
  And quietly through the listening rooms,
And long in prayerful love will kneel,
  And in the sweet-aired twilight glooms
Will set a curtain straight, or chair,
  And dust and order and make fair.

* * * *

O dear dream-house for which we pray,
Our feet come slowly up your way!

Close upon the echo of *Cuckoo Songs* came the *Miracle Plays* of 1895—Mary lilies for the garden first, and then for Mary's own altar. Here was a lovesome recasting of the medieval strain, a series of little poetic plays upon Our Lord's birth and childhood, very devout, very naïve, very artistic; and full, as the best medieval ones were also full, of a simple, vital humanism. Although cast in dialogue form, their strength is mainly lyrical—and at the beginning and end of all six parts are lyrics of extremely quotable beauty. But the dramatic sense surges up in the characterization of the Three Kings, in the exquisite little scene with Simeon at the Presentation, in the song of Dimas' mother. . . . St. Joseph was to take on personality later, in that poem of glorified domesticity, *The Man of the House,* being rather slightly defined in the *Miracle Plays.* But the Virgin moves like a pearl across the pages—

> Hidden and draped from head to feet
> In veils of holiness, yet meet
> For human joy and pain.

It is a mystical, childlike Mary in the early scenes, a "flower of gold and snow" bowered among her blossoms and her birds; a very woman in the hours of stress; a very mother in her sweetly fearful dominance of the final episodes.

Love and motherhood and then death had laid

their seal upon Katharine Tynan's own life—perhaps, indeed, each one of them must needs have laid its seal—before she could conceivably have given us her *Lover's Breast Knot.* She has herself named the flowers it brought into the garden: heartsease for the "marriage of true minds," a *woman's* love songs, more tender than passionate—and love-lies-bleeding, to rest like a sprig of rosemary on the grave of the little lost son, Godfrey. Here, in truth, was passion enough; no passion of ineffectual tears, but the agony of motherhood made barren, the surpassing wistfulness of eyes which must look all the way into eternity before the heart's delight be found. It is a note less of tragedy than of consummate, quintessential pathos, and without it Mrs. Hinkson's poetry could never have attained what was to prove its most piercing loveliness. For are not the poet's lips made vibrant by sorrow, as the prophet's by a burning coal?

Two years later, in 1898, *The Wind in the Trees* came from her hand. It was a new volume of Nature pieces, and had the distinction of being an exhibition without one single "interior." There were a thousand felicities in the pages, many of them to be returned to and developed even more felicitously later on; meanwhile they brought into the garden a wealth of green and glossy grasses, tall, shadowy, woodsy things—conjurings of bird and red deer, of orchards and meadows, of the colleen

milking her cow at dawn. For three years then the Muse spoke rarely; and the garden waited, after the wise, brooding way of gardens, until sun and rain should bring their riot of roses. In 1901 they came —red roses and white, pink and golden—the *Collected Poems,* with a whole sheaf of pages never seen before. The promise of spring had been fulfilled; the flag of midsummer was floating over Katharine Tynan's garden of verse. Her second poetic period had reached its culmination.

This is not to imply, in all later work, decadence. In July there is not decadence; but there is, every gardener knows, a vast difference from June. There is maturity. The aggressive eagerness and radiance of early creation has merged into a something warm, serene, enveloping—a something sweetly humble, which has laid aside the novelty, the exoticism of youth.

I sing of children and of folk on wings,
Of faith, of love, of quiet country things;
Of death that is but lying down at night,
And waking with the birds at morning light;
And of the love of God encompassing;
And of the seasons round from spring to spring;
I sing of gardens, fields, and flowers and trees;
Therefore I call my love-songs Innocencies. . . .

So sang Mrs. Hinkson in the very opening stanza of her *Innocencies* (1905). Looking through the slim volume, one gets the impression of a white

field of daisies; white and sunny and gentle, with here and there a blue gentian for the laughter of child eyes. Very similar were the *Experiences* of 1908. For, in truth, Katharine Tynan's experiences are all innocencies; praises to God for the beauty of earth, for the serviceable senses, for sweet memories and sad, for friends and gardens and the quiet of meadow paths, for sunlight and shadow, and all the comfortable, common things of life.

In the *New Poems* of 1911 it was easy to imagine lavender flowers, pungent yet strangely placid—with the one flaming poppy of *Maternity.* The sun is nearing midheaven; the glad birds chirp in triumphant drowsiness; the golden bee whispers his amorous secrets; the little lambs lie quiet beside contented ewes; men come and go and love and build and sleep at least—in peace. And over the "flying wheel of time" rests the Thought of God, immanent, unchangeable—

> O'er whom Eternity will pass
> But as an image in a glass.

Meanwhile the gold and purple of seed time was coming on apace. The garden waited—and its goldenness shone through a veil of August haze in the *Irish Poems* of 1913. But the earth had been trampled by eager, marching young feet, and soaked with the blood of the War years, before that regal and sorrowful purple was fulfilled. It would

be easy to overaccentuate the note of serenity throughout Mrs. Hinkson's work, since it is always easy to overstress the obvious and to hear only the loudest music. But there are many distinct "motives" in these songs of the seasons, and it is not alone in the most joyous that she has shown herself proved poet. It is true, she has been so inebriated by the beauty and peace of the sunlit earth that her reader may ask at one moment whether it is not weariness of the conflict of life that creeps off into so ideal a refuge—and at another moment, whether the poet has not, perhaps, risen above the dualism of the body into a trance of bright and *true* contemplation? But it must be remembered that after the cataclysm of 1914 had broken upon the world, carrying her own son in its wake, this brave Irishwoman proved one of the most articulate of the older British poets. Into her songs of the young soldier radiant as St. Michael, of the "broken soldier," of the black sheep washed white again in the blood of battle, she contrived to bring blitheness as well as a tear-compelling pathos—and she never lost sight of the *peace* beyond.

It is perhaps to be expected that woman should in her poetry be more acutely sensitive to physical pain than man: not because it is usually her lot to bear more (which, as a rule, she has the grace to do with gallantry), but rather because it is also her lot to soothe the pain of others—whether they be

men or children or the humbler beasts. And this is perhaps why women have written with so comprehending, even, at times, so imaginative a compassion of *animals.* Early in Katharine Tynan's work came a little legendary poem about Christ and the pitiful dead dog in the streets of Jerusalem—while from first to last she has sung with peculiar, persistent ecstasy about the feathered creatures which the good God made "in a moment merry." But it remained for a rather late poem, *The Ass Speaks,* to take its place beside a few of Louise Guiney's, one of Gilbert Chesterton's and another of Francis Jammes' among the "heart remembered" animal songs of our generation. And like those others in the group, it, too, is half a song of God:

I am the little Ass of Christ—
  I carried Him ere He was born,
And bore Him to His bitter tryst
  Unwilling, that Palm Sunday morn.

I was His Mother's servant, I,
  I carried her from Nazareth,
Up to the shining hill-country,
  To see the Lady Elizabeth.

The stones were many in my road.
  By valleys steeper than a cup,
I, trembling for my heavenly load,
  Went cat-foot since I held It up.

* * * *

I knelt beside my brother Ox,
  And saw the very Birth! O Love,
And awe and wonder! little folks
  May see such sights nor die thereof.

The chilly Babe we breathed upon,
  Warmed with our breath the frozen air,
Kneeling beside Our Lady's gown,
  His only comfort saving Her.

I am beaten, weary foot, ill-fed;
  Men curse me: yet I bear withal
Christ's Cross betwixt my shoulders laid,
  So I am honored though I'm small.

I bore Christ Jesus, and I bear
  His Cross upon my rough, grey back.
Dear Christian people, pray you, spare
  The whip, for Jesus Christ, His sake.

Something of this tender, colloquial note goes into all of Katharine Tynan's devotional poetry. It was the charm of the *Miracle Plays,* and it gave sincerity to the more ornate pre-Raphaelite pieces. By temperament Mrs. Hinkson is, of course, less mystical than Francis Thompson or even Dante Rossetti; but in the best of her religious poems she becomes mystical because of the definite intimacy with which she clothes Uranian themes. In the sharp, sweet music of her very characteristic *Garden* is a lyric breath not unworthy of Francis, the Little Poor Man known also as *le Jongleur de*

Dieu. It is a praise, first of all, of that mysterious Garden where the God-Man took

His pleasures oft, by Kedron's brook.
There in His uttermost agony
He found a pillow whereon to lie
And anguish while His disciples slept.
Be sure the little grass-blades kept
Vigil with Him, and the grey olives
Shivered and sighed like one that grieves,
And the flowers hid their eyes for fear!
His garden was His comforter.
There to the quiet heart He made,
He came, and it upheld His head
Before the angel did. Therefore
Blessed be gardens evermore!

The song gathers up the story of another garden, wherein "He lay, stabbed through, one wound," the quiet earth holding Him close for His three days' sleep. And it is here, while the "widowed flowers" are bowed low with watching, that the dawn of Easter breaks:

O! in the beautiful rose-red day
Who comes a-walking down this way?
Why's Magdalen weeping? Ah, sweet lady,
She knows not where is her Lord's Body!
Sweet Magdalen, see! here is your Love!
Whom Solomon's seal and the sweet-clove
Brush with their lips as He goes by.
Now bid His disciples haste! Bring hither
His Mother and St. John together!

But 'twas the Garden saw Him rise.
Wherefore she flaunts her peacock's eyes;
Wherefore her birds sing low and loud,
The heart that bare His sleep is proud.

Never has it been in the nature of Katharine Tynan's work to fall into the snare of didacticism; if she teaches, one scarcely knows it, and she is wise enough to seem ignorant of the fact herself. Yet no one can ignore the peculiar nobility with which, from almost every angle, she has treated the subject of death. This is not merely in the religious poems, nor in that spirited and singing bit of symbolism. *Planting Bulbs*—it is the pervading message of her song. From that early recognition of Azrael (little-loved yet much-loving angel!) in the very youth of her work, she has simply dismissed the traditional *fear* of death. For she has found a stronger thing, Love which casts out fear; and this she carries unhesitatingly into every human relationship. Hence one finds the constantly recurring—but in her hands never morbid—*motif* of the return of the dead: the *motif* of the little dead child remembering and comforting the mother still "under sentence of life," or of the dead son or lover coming back—from the War, perhaps—

> With all the bitter, dreadful things
> Forgot, clean washed away. . . .

Still more insistent is the theme of the dead mother stealing back with the old tender vigilance,

A little ghost in white,
To rock a tiny cradle all in the hushed moonlight.

But there one comes upon the dominant music and the dominant message of all Mrs. Hinkson's poetry —the message of her essential motherhood. It was a note of wistfulness at first; then, in the multitude of child pieces, a thing of protective, sunny joy, at once of queenliness and humility. In the *Lover's Breast Knot* was the other story, too sacred and too sorrowful to tell in broken fragments. But even there love manifestly triumphs—it is so much stronger than death! Katharine Tynan does not doubt that it is stronger also than Hell; and she has said so in one of the most striking poems ever written upon the subject of the prodigal child. Humanly speaking, *Maternity* is really the last word:

There is no height, no depth, my own, could set us apart,
Body of mine and soul of mine: heart of my heart!
There is no sea so deep, my own, no mountain so high,
That I should not come to you if I heard you cry.
There is no hell so sunken, no heaven so steep,
Where I should not seek my own, find you and keep.
Now you are round and soft to see, sweet as a rose,

Not a stain on my spotless one, white as the snows.
If some day you came to me heavy with sin,
I, your mother, would run to the door and let you in.
I would wash you white again with my tears and grief,
Body of mine and soul of mine, till you found relief.

* * * * * * * * *

Child, if I were in heaven one day and you were in hell—
Angels white as my spotless one stumbled and fell—
I would leave for you the fields of God and Queen Mary's feet,
Straight to the heart of hell would go, seeking my sweet.
God mayhap would turn Him around at sound of the door:
"Who is it goes out from Me to come back no more?"
Then the blessed Mother of God would say from her throne:
"Son, 'tis a mother goes to hell, seeking her own.
Body of mine and soul of mine, born of me,
Thou Who wert once little Jesus beside my knee,
It is like to that all mothers are made: Thou madest them so.
Body of mine and soul of mine, do I not know?"

If poetry must be haled before the bar of theology, those bold stanzas may, indeed, be found wanting. The white light of divine and perfect wisdom is broken into facets of vibrating color—although surely in that palpitating purple, that crimson of the

heart's own blood, may be found a reflection of the love which surpasses even that of woman.

But before the bar of poetry, Mrs. Hinkson may well rest her case with that great lyric. Nowhere do her love poems equal its concentrated passion. She has, to be sure, given us authentic love songs, although romantic love has scarcely been a favorite theme—reticent little songs in the earlier volumes, and in her maturer work songs of a calm and sweet fruition. It is a music of domesticity, deep but not deeply troubled: the sea surges toward harbor lights. For sundered lovers, staggering separately along their *Via Crucis* until paths converge at last, for hearts bruised and broken by life, our poet has no word. It is the *True Marriage* of hidden grace and manifest love, the union grown purer by long use and daily sacrifice, which she interprets with a delicate and even exquisite fervor.

The garden is primitive always—a sweet and childlike thing, with the kiss of Eden still upon its face. That is why we have so insistently kept to the figure in discussing Mrs. Hinkson's poetry. Its music is determinately simple and naïve: deliciously simple in the better pieces, which are nearly always just more masterful or more spontaneous versions of the weaker ones. But simplicity, as Wordsworth long ago proved, is a difficult grace to manage. The "simple life," save when exquisite choice has created

the simplicity, tends to become the meagre life. And professedly simple verse trembles upon the brink of crudity and commonplace—unless, as with recent experimentalists, it deliberately trembles over into the bizarre or the grotesque. Mrs. Hinkson has written some fifteen volumes of verse, along with an enormous production of prose. Within such space, it would be incredible if she had not proved at moments reminiscent—both of herself and others. Gardens also are repetitional; gardens are over-productive; and the richer the soil, the more certain is the harvest to have need of a pruning-fork.

Katharine Tynan's harvest has, in all truth, been rich—in sympathy, in fancy, in the rarer virtues of sincerity and idealized emotion. Hers is a gentle, gracious, intensely personal art, stronger always in creation than in criticism. When it reaches out to experiences as old and as large as humanity, it does so by the simple right of having lived and felt one life sensitively. There is little in her work of what one is fond of calling Celtic *other-worldliness*—a thing beloved of poet and dreamer, not unknown to peasant or beggar, but no whit more real and not one tenth so general as Celtic *domesticity*. For there is no more home-making race on earth than the Irish, while the Irishman as lover (not in any precise sense mystical!) has become a fable to the nations. . . . And here is an Irishwoman whose poetry is at once

fragrant and childlike and motherlike—whose style and vision, too, have grown more artless with the years, until they have reached the beautiful ingenuousness of maturity, not questioning but satisfied.

FATHER TABB

IT IS the tragedy of all beauty that it shall so soon be taken for granted—just as God and His Sacraments and sunsets and our human loves are taken for granted. The divine things can endure it: they have all eternity to wait until we catch up with them. It is the beautiful, transient things of life and art that suffer most, that leave us "poor indeed" through our defection; because, perhaps, we shall not have a chance to pass their way again. Setting aside love and sunsets, there are the poets, for instance . . . The poets who are "minor" only in quantity of their work, in limitation of their range, but who are recognized almost immediately as unique, as ultimate—who attain to the anthologies, and who are subsequently not even argued about. There are not so very many of this elect company; and, on the American side at least, Father Tabb must long ago have been appointed their chaplain-general.

Because he is so inimitable, he has been and still is constantly imitated. Because he so obviously achieves whatever he likes with words, no respectable critic has ever been tempted to attack him. Yet,

how much about John Bannister Tabb's work does the more-than-average reader really know? Here is an artist whose music Mrs. Meynell profoundly compared to that of George Herbert on one side and of Mozart on the other: and in a recent, vivid study of American poetry and its makers * he is not even mentioned. Possibly it is because he is still too close to us that he is not fully recognized; perhaps it is because he was a priest that he seems still somewhat set apart—the world being quick to discover that Pegasus does not take kindly to being ruled by the parish bell, and somewhat slow to admit that the apostle can be, and repeatedly has been, an artist also.

> The hero in the saint the crowd can honor,
> The saint at best forgive . . .

sang the wise Aubrey de Vere. And there was something of the saint, too—a saint at once tender and taciturn—in Father Tabb. But by any and all counts, poetry-lovers must admit that not half enough critical knowledge or critical praise has yet been meted out to him. One is grateful for the more or less local tributes—for critiques written from the devotional or the ancestral viewpoint. They are all good, all serviceable. But he is a citizen of the *universe* of letters. He invites and can endure the "abashless inquisition" of art itself. He is jus-

* *Modern American Poetry*, by Louis Untermeyer.

tified not by faith alone, but by faith and supremely good work!

There is rather a curious coincidence in the fact that both Father Tabb and Father Ryan—the two American priests who first won popular recognition as poets—should have been sons of that Southland which is not generally associated with Catholic traditions. Traditions there were, indeed, rich and ancient enough, about the head of John Bannister Tabb, although not of the Faith. He was born of a patrician English-Scotch family, one of the earliest to settle in Virginia; his father, Thomas Yelverton Tabb, being a direct descendant of Sir Thomas Peyton and of that Humphrey Tabb who was already burgess of Elizabeth City County in the year 1652. As the future poet's mother (tenderly immortalized in his "Cowslip" verses) was first cousin to her husband, she naturally shared his genealogy: by name she was Marianna Bertrand Archer, a daughter of the distinguished Dr. Archer of "The Forest," Amelia County, Virginia. And at this latter estate the boy was born, on March 22nd in that year of 1845, which must forever be associated with the historic submission of John Henry Newman to the Catholic Church. Little John Tabb had an adoring black "Mammy" from whom he won his first superlative by being delightedly dubbed "the ugliest baby ever born in Virginia"—and his childhood was passed in an atmosphere prob-

ably more leisurely than any since known to this strenuous continent, the atmosphere of the Old South. In the course of time he studied under the family tutor, one Mr. Thomas Hood, along with his brother Yelverton and a few of the neighbors' children who were permitted to attend classes at Cassels, the Tabb homestead. One of these pupils, a cousin, later described the whimsical "Johnny" as the "most joyous, rollicking and trifling boy" he had ever known—a lad who rarely "studied his lessons a minute," and whose chastisements (not of the modern "moral" kind!) were consequently frequent. But he was already the favorite of the school and a very clever cartoonist, to boot: and if he neglected his books, he gave proof of heroic concentration when the incentive was strong enough by frequently sitting at the piano six hours a day.

In 1861, the threatened scourge of Civil War swept the country into two hostile camps, and John Tabb—although only sixteen years old—proved equal to the other sons of Virginia in immediate valor. As his already feeble eyesight disqualified him from army service, he enlisted in the Confederate Navy and was assigned as captain's clerk on the ship "Robert E. Lee." It is said that this adventurous craft ran the Federal blockade twenty-one times; but in 1864, when returning from England, she was captured—and young Tabb was one of those forthwith sent as prisoners to the "Bull Pen," Point

Lookout. Inevitably, it was a searing experience: but its great consolation was the companionship of the gentle poet and musician, Sidney Lanier. The friendship of the two young Southern patriots, begun in those "evil days," lasted through life and doubtless beyond. For in more than one of his later poems, John Bannister Tabb celebrated the memory of Lanier, and of the precious flute with which he had sweetened the bitterness of their captivity.

With the peace of 1865, the future priest returned home—weakened by fever and illness, indeed, but as he soon found less broken than his beloved Virginia. As the ancestral estate was ruined, he cast about for some immediate means of earning a living. Music was his first thought; but this had to be abandoned in favor of teaching, and in 1866 he accepted a post—momentous as it afterward proved—as instructor in St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal School, Baltimore. The parish with which this was connected was of the advanced ritualistic type, its rector being the Reverend Alfred Curtis, with whom the youthful pedagogue almost immediately entered into relations of affectionate intimacy. A more stimulating friendship could scarcely have been imagined, and it continued unbroken when, about 1870, John Bannister passed on to a more lucrative post at Racine, Wisconsin.

There was no longer any doubt about it—the boy who would not study was a predestined professor:

but with teaching merely human truths he was already unsatisfied. So within a year he resigned his chair, to enter the theological seminary of his ancestral faith at Alexandria, Virginia. But his feet were destined for more distant shrines, and a sharp turn in the road of their pilgrimage. For almost simultaneous with his own decision to enter the Protestant Episcopal ministry was Mr. Curtis' conviction that he must abandon it. With characteristic sincerity, the former pastor promptly severed his powerful association with St. Paul's foundation and sailed for England as a humble seeker after truth from the lips of the Oxford apostle, Dr. Newman. More than one soul trembled in the balance during their conferences; and when the mighty Oratorian bade Mr. Curtis to read more and study "if he liked," but above all, to *pray*, he was all unwittingly doubling the orisons of another and younger neophyte, over in Virginia. In 1872, Alfred Curtis was baptized into the Catholic Church in the presence of his preceptor, John Henry Newman. And before that year was out, in St. Peter's Cathedral, and all in one single golden day, John Bannister Tabb partook at the hands of Bishop Gibbons (the future cardinal) the four sacraments of Baptism, Penance, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. "I was always a Catholic—born a Catholic," he declared later on. "Whenever any doctrine of the Church was spoken of, I knew it was true as soon as I heard

it. I would have been a member of the Church before I was, if I had learned what the Catholic doctrines were, and had known that they were taught and practised in the Catholic Church." With him, as with so many converts, the "coming over" had been less a matter of revelation than of inspired recognition; and in his newly acquired fulness of faith he found immediate and permanent peace.

It was, perhaps, a foregone conclusion that both of these men should press on to their natural, or supernatural, home in the further sacrament of Holy Orders. In fact, Mr. Curtis proceeded at once to St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore—and eventually, of course, to the episcopacy as bishop of Wilmington. With more "deliberate speed" but not less "majestic instancy," young Mr. Tabb entered in 1874 St. Charles' College, Ellicott City, Maryland. And there he remained, with the briefest of temporary vacations, until his death thirty-five years later. His was, in all truth, a life of singular simplicity—and like the poetry he was to create, one of singular concentration and even condensation. There is an old saying that a happy woman has no history: but even the most conservative would hesitate to suggest this of a happy man! And yet, the life under consideration was essentially happy in achieving at once spiritual fulness and usefulness and objective artistic satisfaction—while being, with quite obvious

spontaneity, *itself*. Only it was, both from circumstances and desire, a very hidden life.

When Father Tabb first went to St. Charles' Seminary, his intention was simply to complete his classical studies, then to follow his friend, Father Curtis, to St. Mary's. But the Sulpicians were so deeply impressed with his rare teaching gifts that they persuaded him to stay on at Ellicott City, continuing his theological studies while one of their own faculty. Consequently, he was not ordained to the priesthood until December, 1884, when he celebrated his first Mass—with quite extraordinary joy—in the college chapel, at midnight on Christmas Eve. His patience in brooking this long delay of his vocation seems all the more notable in a man of such keen sensibilities and quick wit. Indeed, this quality of patience—whether natural or acquired at great cost, who shall know?—was conspicuous throughout his whole life. It was the guardian angel of his classroom, where he presided with unfailing energy and humor, not only through the inspiring hours of English literature, but also through the more arid and technical periods of English grammar. Generations of students learned from him to love the fine things of speech and poetry—and to this perennial harvest of his pupils, "Active and Passive; Perfect and Imperfect; Past, Present and Future," Father Tabb dedicated those inimitable *Bone Rules*, or *Skeleton of English Grammar*, which inaugurated

a new and vivid fashion in text-books. One can imagine the gurgle of delight with which any young wrestler with the King's English would attack the following, among "sentences to be corrected":

> "Lay still," his mother often said
> When Washington had went to bed.
> But little Georgie would reply:
> "I set up, but I cannot lie!"

Of course, the supreme test of the poet-priest's patience came with the partial and, at last, complete failure of his eyesight during the latter years. This ever-darkening shadow of blindness he met with constant work and equally constant wit, almost to the very end. Many and historic have become the puns and *bon mots* with which he bantered his calamity—his request that Cardinal Gibbons confer upon him "a new see," his quips about "taking his two worst pupils" up to Baltimore, having his volume of poems bound in "blind-man's buff," etc., etc. But like the long line of laughing saints, John Bannister Tabb smiled at sorrow because he had learned the stark secret of abandonment in God's hands. To his friend and former pupil, Father Connor of Scranton, he declared a while before the end: "If the Almighty came to me and said: 'John Tabb, you can have your eyesight back by asking for it,' I would not ask. I would be afraid of proving unfaithful to responsibilities of which I might not

be fully aware. Now I know perfectly what is God's will and I am resigned to it." The one supreme privilege of offering up Holy Mass was permitted Father Tabb even in blindness, and it is not easy to think unmoved of this ultimate union between the silent, hidden Victim and the priest whose eyes were closed to all but Him . . . . In the *Later Poems*, published after Father Tabb's death, one finds that message of *Helplessness*, which so consummately distils the threefold secret of the purgative, the illuminative and the unitive ways:

In patience as in labor must thou be
A follower of Me,
Whose hands and feet, when most I wrought for thee,
Were nailed unto a tree . . .

Delivery came to him after a short illness, on November nineteenth, 1909; and like one of his own poetic paradoxes, it was midnight when the *Light not of this world* broke suddenly upon him.

Father Tabb possessed a most unique and vivid personality, and to his idiosyncrasies even the poet's gift owed much. This gift he does not seem to have discovered, or at least to have used, until after slipping into the destined groove at St. Charles' College—that is to say, after all his great decisions were made and his own individuality was well matured. And if the distinguishing merits of his poetry were mystical insight on one hand and

metrical skill on the other, it will not do to forget those minor characteristics which were so intimately his own. One of these was a pungent, an almost perverse originality: the quality which Poe had in mind when he declared that the true poet could never see, and consequently never say, the obvious thing. Another was intuitive sympathy, particularly with child-nature. And a third was his glorified but quite incorrigible habit of punning.

His Nature poems are, for the most part, brief vignettes of long vision and exquisitely compressed music—painting Nature realistically in such verses as the "Fern Song," but more often interpreting her by some sudden and arresting analogy. Here, for instance, are two flower pieces in which surprise leaps to a new truth, and fancy to a new simplicity of vision:

MIGNONETTE

Give me the earth, and I might heap
A mountain from the plain;
Give me the waters of the deep,
I might their strength restrain;
But here a secret of the sod
Betrays the daintier hand of God.

THE WATER LILY

Whence, O fragrant form of light,
Hast thou drifted through the night,
Swanlike to a leafy nest
On the restless waves at rest?
Art thou from the snowy zone

Of a mountain-summit blown,
Or the blossom of a dream,
Fashioned in the foamy stream?
Nay, methinks the maiden moon,
When the daylight came too soon,
Fleeting from her bath to hide,
Left her garment in the tide.

Of the poems for children—Father Tabb wrote one entire volume of them, and scattered others throughout his various books—it is perhaps the highest praise to say that children themselves understand and love them. "Only great poets can write about childhood poems worthy to be printed," declared Joyce Kilmer—who knew both childhood and poetry! Surely, between the multitude of poems about children and children's supposed interests written from the adult standpoint, and such delectable foolery as the following, there is all the difference between Dresden tea-cups and—buttercups! For here the poet is so sure of himself, and of poetry, that he is not a whit afraid to play with words:—

Who combs you, little squirrel?
  And do you twist and twirl
When someone puts the papers on
  To keep your tail in curl?
And must you see the dentist
  For every tooth you break?
And are you apt, from eating nuts,
  To get the stomach-ache?

Again, following the child's imagining straight up to the skies, Father Tabb gives this version of the bluebird's creation:

> When God had made a host of them,
> One little flower still lacked a stem
> To hold its blossom blue;
> So into it, He breathed a song,
> And suddenly, with petals strong
> As wings, away it flew.

But of course, the most celestial of all his child poems—one of the most perfect child poems in all literature (although infinite maturity went into its making!), and by the same token one of the most unique of Christmas verses—is the well-beloved "Out of Bounds":

> A little boy of heavenly birth,
> But far from home today,
> Comes down to find His ball, the earth,
> That Sin has cast away.
> O comrades, let us one and all
> Join in to get Him back His ball!

It is quite commonly possible to have an extraordinary fondness for animals without any all-embracing sympathy for "man's unpardonable race": but it is far less possible to love little children without loving grown-up children, and somehow comprehending their broken or unbroken toys.

Father Tabb, while intensely shy of strangers and of all public functions, even ecclesiastical, had deep wells of affection and copious sympathies. Indeed, this hermit-priest, to whom in the outward sense almost nothing ever seemed to happen, possessed not only the "genius for friendship" but also the priceless gift of psychic versatility. He could enshrine in one perfect quatrain Father Damien, the "leper white as snow"; yes, and he could also probe the ultimate passion of "Cleopatra and the Asp" or of "St. Afra to the Flames." Death was familiar to him—as indeed, it grows familiar to all priests; but because he was a poet, it was the singleness, not the uniformity, of death. He found words, quiet words, to voice the mysterious pathos of broken babyhood—even of martyred motherhood—in "Confided":

Another lamb, O Lamb of God, behold
  Within this quiet fold,
Among Thy Father's sheep
  I lay to sleep!
A heart that never for a night did rest
  Beyond its mother's breast.
Lord, keep it close to Thee,
Lest waking it should bleat and pine for me!

And under the selfsame symbol, he made audible the contrasting pathos of tired age in his "Old Pastor":

How long, O Lord, to wait
Beside this open gate?
  Thy sheep with many a lamb
  Have entered, and I am
Alone, and it is late.

In conversation, as has been already pointed out, it was Father Tabb's high habit to jest at the jeopardy of his eyesight, but in a few of his later poems he permitted the Voice of the Great Void to speak aloud. *"Fiat lux"* is one of the most piercing of these; yet to some of us, the terrible simplicity of "Going Blind" strikes even closer:

Back to the primal gloom
Where life began,
As to my mother's womb
Must I, a man,
  Return:

Not to be born again,
But to remain;
And in the school of Darkness learn
What mean
  "The things unseen."

Through all these poems rings the same note of ultimate hope—the hope, even the mystical certainty, of *light in darkness.* And there can be no doubt at all that he actually achieved this. Possibly the accident of blindness aided, possibly it had very little to do with it, since spiritual insight—or the

lack of it—is not in the natural order. But through all his later years, he spoke habitually as one for whom the Veil of the mortal temple had long since been rent asunder. As he himself said (and as everyone writing about him seems bound to quote!)—

> My God has hid Himself from me
> Behind whatever else I see . . .

The result was an enormous enriching of the imagination, even on the human side. To obtain this gift of mystical vision is to *see*, indeed, with a lucency beside which mortal eyesight seems too myopic even for regret. It is to see in the Assumption the mother-bird soaring up at the fledgling's familiar call, to hear the trees along the Via Crucis murmuring to one another "in awful silence" as the God-Man passes,

> Behold, the Gardener is He
> Of Eden and Gethsemane. .

And it is to discover the final cosmic harmony, far from our daily discord and unrest, of a poem such as "The Dayspring":

> What hand with spear of light
> Hath cleft the side of Night,
> And from the red wound wide

Fashioned the Dawn, his bride?
Was it the deed of Death?
Nay, but of Love, that saith,
"Henceforth be Shade and Sun,
In bonds of Beauty, one."

John Bannister Tabb may be said to have anticipated the recent school of "imagism" in the pictorial vigor and boldness of his metaphors. In fact, he is nearly all on the side of the moderns: and if one wishes to realize just how nearly, one has but to compare—or contrast—his work with that of his confrère and contemporary, Father Abram Ryan. Father Ryan's work is remembered for the sincere pathos of "The Conquered Banner," for the tender piety of such short pieces as "The Valley of Silence": all of his longer efforts are forgotten. For his affiliations were with his poetic predecessors: in more senses than one, he was the gentle laureate of a lost cause. But again and again, Father Tabb points on toward the children of the future. He shared Edgar Poe's revolutionary belief that "a long poem does not exist," and he stood, as nearly every poet of today stands, committed to the brief lyric —worthy of perpetuation because it gathers up perfectly the emotion and the music of the moment. It is doubtful, certainly, if his intense musical sense and the felicity and facility of his muse would ever have permitted him to espouse the crusade of free verse. On the contrary, his metrical skill was so

certain that he rejoiced in all the finesses of his craft. He was master not only of the sonnet but of the sextet and the quatrain. And the challenge of these forms is, to the poet, what the intimacy and the exaction of the "little theatre" are to the actor. The lines are so frightfully few, so frightfully close, not one can afford to waver by a hair's breadth!

But all this is simply saying that Father Tabb was a consummate artist—candidly, one of the very few consummate artists in American literature. Within his chosen and highly specialized field he stands peerless. Always in his work the vision is unique—the music like a swift, sure clash of bells. It has become a distinguishing note of contemporary poetry to ask questions beautifully and vividly. But Father Tabb found beautiful and vivid answers, too. Therein lies his demarcation from the ultra-modernists, in his frank but fastidious derivations from the past—from the eternal. For mysticism, authentic mysticism, is not merely the cure for materialism. It is, also, the completion of estheticism.

OF JOYCE KILMER

BETWEEN war and the poets there is an enmity as irreconcilable as that between the woman and the dragon of the Apocalypse, or between beauty and violence, or, to speak quite simply, between good and evil. And because of this enmity, this "pure and perfect hate," they are eternally seeking one another—that they may eternally destroy one another. Joyce Kilmer himself sang about this perennial leap of the poets into battle: all the long way from that "loveliest of kings," David, who "smote now his harp and now the hostile horde," to the days of the young Rupert Brooke. And of war's mortal aim at that being so precious to man, the *song-maker*, the blood-stained centuries make their repetitional confession . . . even down to the bullet which laid low the poet of our own Expeditionary Forces. Yet still is song herself immortal: and never a poet falls, but a thousand new poems are given to man.

It was the hardest of all things to believe, that sudden quenching of Joyce Kilmer's enormous vitality. When he marched so blithely and so modestly to the wars—"Naturally I'm expecting to go, being

of appropriate age and sex," he wrote to one friend; and he insisted upon going as a private, not wishing, as he said, "to be an officer in charge of conscripts" —when he went, we all said that the tragic outcome was unthinkable. And we said it the more vehemently, perhaps, because the deep "reason of the heart" knew it to be inevitable. He must needs die as he had lived, swiftly, beautifully, with a purpose. His was the cry, not always so promptly answered, of every crusading heart—

> A short life in the saddle, Lord,
> Not long life by the fire!

In manner, Joyce seemed purposely to avoid all appearance of haste; yet the whole crowded record which began in New Brunswick on that first birthday, the sixth of December, 1886, is one of almost incredible concentration. He asked much of life— and as usual, life returned the compliment. Before he was twenty-two years old he had found time to be graduated from Rutgers College and Columbia University; and from the classroom he sped on not only to the posts of editor and teacher but to the happier if heavier burdens of husband and father. He bounded up the heights of song, and labored most patiently in the valley of toil. He plumbed the deep seas of the soul, and did not rest until he had captured the one priceless pearl of Faith.

On all sides he gathered in his brief transit the spoils of honor, of service, of tenderness and of mirth. "His life," declared his friend Robert Cortes Holliday, "was a fury of writing." A fury of *living* it was in all truth for the boy-faced poet, until that moment of intense and heroic action when the mortal bullet pierced his brain, plunging him suddenly into the ultimate peace. As all the world knows now, Joyce had gone out ahead of the battalion to locate suspected machine-guns in a copse so aptly called the Wood of the Burned Bridge. When the men of his own "Sixty-ninth" overtook him later, he was lying where he had crept, his eyes apparently still gazing over a natural trench into the enemy quarters. They called, but could not break in upon his silence . . . That was on July thirtieth, 1918, at the very height of our historic summer offensive. And not far from the trampled hillside by the Ourcq where Joyce Kilmer fell, his body lies today, in the great American cemetery at Fère-en-Tardenois. One knows, too, that he would like best to sleep in that garden of stark white crosses: close to the war-wounded heart of France, very close to his fighting brothers—his own grave singled out from theirs only by its simple inscription, or by the fresh and faithful flowers so constantly found bearing their witness of memory and of love.

"I have discovered," Joyce wrote some few weeks before his end to a friend who was both poet and

priest, "since some unforgettable experiences, that writing is not the tremendously important thing I once considered it. You will find me less a bookman when you next see me, and more, I hope, a man." There he did himself—as usual!—less than justice, for he was always preeminently and incorrigibly the man. His humanism was an impassioned thing, a thing of principle and of instinct, too. There were some of us who used to tease him about his persistent democracy—he being wont to defend himself with the most democratic and beautiful fervor. And loving so the common things of universal life, he set about glorifying them in his verse. Like Patmore, dazzled by the warm firelight of joyous domesticity, he determined to sing again the paean of "things too simple and too sweet for words." He found rainbows staining every sidewalk—transfiguring the delicatessen shop or the midnight commuter's train, spanning the dull apartment-house if a woman's face but shone from some upper window, even glorifying the urban *patois* of "servant girl and grocer's boy." These little *genre* sketches, as they might be called, were exceedingly well done, and they struck an immediately popular note. There was a time, indeed, when Joyce Kilmer's sympathy and facility threatened to make of him another colloquial singer, like—with a difference!—Eugene Fields or James Whitcomb Riley. And being from first to last an idealist, the young

poet had at heart a really profound reason for this praise of the ordinary; the same reason which made him later on declare the Catholic Church to be "the one genuine democratic institution of the twentieth century." He summed it up very perfectly at the close of *Delicatessen*:

O Carpenter of Nazareth,
  Whose mother was a village maid,
Shall we, Thy children, blow our breath
  In scorn on any humble trade?
Have pity on our foolishness
  And give us eyes, that we may see
Beneath the shopman's clumsy dress
  The splendor of humanity.

Here was precisely the cause to which he was sworn in life and death, too—*the splendor of humanity*. But Joyce in his time played many parts. He was not only a poet: he was also what he would probably have described as a literary hack—but what others would name one of the best-known and most versatile newspaper-men in the United States. He has left one volume which might serve as a manual of the gentle, and difficult, art of interviewing. He was a literary critic of quick insight and even quicker sympathies, an admirable editor and lecturer. And his little book *The Circus*, published the winter preceding his enlistment, shows him a familiar essayist of real charm and distinction. Here he chats in

a very modern, very sympathetic and slightly satiric vein about alarm-clocks, the abolition of poets, the joys of the subway and the picturesque democracy of the commuter's life. It is the chatting of one who thinks both clearly and cheerfully; by the same token, it is the irony of one who has never forgotten the dreams of the far-away purple mountains. One is tempted to quote many colorful or amusing passages: the thrilling adventure of the young clerk's noonday freedom, or the gentle "reconciliation" of the *day after Christmas*, when the majestic tree becomes a familiar friend since "some of its needles have formed little green aromatic heaps on the carpet, and . . . the china angel and two or three of the red glass balls have been taken down for the baby to play with." But probably the delicate and very human quality of Joyce Kilmer's fancy is nowhere more attractive than in this fragment from the highly original essay which gives title to the book:—

"The stage's glories have been sung by many a poet. But the circus has had no laureate; it has had to content itself with the passionate prose of its press agent. The loss is poetry's, not the circus'. For the circus is itself a poem—a poem in that it is a lovely and enduring expression of the soul of man, his mirth, and his romance, and a poet in that it is a maker, a creator of splendid fancies in the minds of those who see it.

"And there are poets in the circus. They are not, perhaps, the men and women who make their living by their skill and daring, risking their lives to entertain the world. . . No, the subjective artists, the poets, are to be found in the basement if the show is at the Garden, or, if the show be outside New York, they are to be found in the little tents—the side shows. This is not a mere sneer at the craft of poetry, a mere statement that poets are freaks. Poets are not freaks. But freaks are poets. . . Behold, therefore, the man on whom a crushing misfortune has come. He puts his grief into fair words, and shows it to the public. Thereby he gets money and fame. Behold, therefore, a man whom misfortune touched before his birth, and dwarfed him, and made him a ridiculous image of humanity. He shows his misfortune to the public and gets money and fame thereby. This poet shows a soul scarred by the cruel whips of injustice; this man a back scarred by the tattooer's needle.

"But the freaks would not like to change places with the poets. The freaks get large salaries (they seem large to poets) and they are carefully tended, for they are delicate. See, here is a man who lives although his back is broken! There is a crowd around him; how interested they are! Would they be as interested in a poet who lived although his heart was broken? Probably not. But, then, there are not many freaks."

This is a capital example of what Joyce describes, in his admirable essay on Hilaire Belloc, as "the poet who writes prose." It is also eloquent evidence of the critical faculty which was only second to his

naturally rich and indigenous creativeness. No one could know better than Joyce Kilmer when he was being praised "for the wrong reason." He knew quite well, for instance, that his much lauded *Twelve Forty-five* (how he detested being asked to read it aloud after one of his lectures!) was a *tour de force.* But he would have been the last to claim that such delightful journalistic verse was really poetry—even if he did once whimsically describe a poet as "only a glorified reporter." Simplicity and love of humanity were his both by natural taste and as cultivated virtues; cultivated by way of protest against the artificial and highly inhuman literary fads which preceded the fads for "virility" and "elementalism." Against all these Joyce Kilmer's face was as flint; his scorn of them was but scarcely contained in such biting diatribes as *To Certain Poets.* But as his youth grew toward maturity, his enthusiasm into experience, he perceived that *naïveté* itself might conceivably become a mannerism. More and more he put from him the suspicion of a professional domesticity—a professional democracy. The rarer quality, the essential poetry, which had always underlain his work, leaped then into its rightful, foremost place.

The Kilmer manner is, of course, at its best in the much-quoted and consummately perfect lyric called *Trees.* This was nearer, perhaps, to the supreme, brief songs of Blake than to any more

recent poet; but it was more winsomely human than Blake. It was of exquisite simplicity, neither precious nor puerile. And of the same fine lineage is the less familiar *Easter* quatrain—

The air is like a butterfly
With frail blue wings.
The happy earth looks at the sky
And sings.

There are originality and flashes of both human and divine passion in *The Fourth Shepherd.* But one of the most radiant of these earlier poems, and one of which the poet himself was rather fond, is that riot of music and imagery called *Stars*:

Bright stars, yellow stars, flashing through the air,
Are you errant strands of Lady Mary's hair?
As she slits the cloudy veil and bends down through,
Do you fall across her cheeks and over heaven too?
Gay stars, little stars, you are little eyes,
Eyes of baby angels playing in the skies.
Now and then a winged child turns his merry face
Down toward the spinning world—what a funny place!

* * * *

Christ's troop, Mary's guard, God's own men,
Draw your swords and strike at hell and strike again.
Every steel-born spark that flies where God's battles are,
Flashes past the face of God, and is a star.

All of these poems are contained in the volume entitled *Trees,* published in 1914. There was a still earlier volume, *Summer of Love,* marked by the faults and virtues of tentative youth, which Joyce was quite willing to have go out of print; although, as he modestly said, "some of the poems, those inspired by genuine love, are not things of which to be ashamed." His higher music was increasingly to the fore in *Main Street,* which did not come from the press in its completion until after Private Kilmer had sailed for France. But here, too, were at least three little poems—the title-giver, *Roofs,* and *The Snowman in the Yard*—which were a lovesome apotheosis of the earlier familiar style. Professedly, these are not subtle; although to us who have grown familiar with the easy irony and the easy ennui of a later literary school, there is nothing very obvious in an idealism which dares label the Milky Way of the illimitable skies "Main Street, Heaventown." There were tender felicities on almost every page of this little book—enough tenderness and enough passion in the three *Memory* sonnets to furnish a whole garden of love-songs for a more erotic poet. But also there was development—in variety of theme and lyric treatment, in emotional depth and breadth and height. It is significant, too, that during that final year or two Joyce Kilmer wrote less frequently, for when a young man and robustly creative poet ceases to be prolific, it is usually a hopeful phase of transi-

tion. In art as in the spiritual life, Newman's dictum holds true: "To live is to change . . . to be perfect is to have changed often." By every count, indeed, Joyce was growing. For the new life coming to the world after the War, he was magnificently prepared; how well, both spiritually and technically, is shown by the few poems published during his active service, by *The Prayer of a Soldier in France*, and the haunting song of "the wood called Rouge Bouquet." Where the future might have led his active and ardent spirit one can but conjecture now. He was less than thirty-two years old when the bullet found him. But which among his contemporaries, which of all the younger American poets, could show a sounder and fresher achievement, or a more solid promise?

In the volume called *Trees* was one poem which we have purposely deferred to mention, not because its implications were few but because they were so many. This was the poem *Folly*, one of the most thoroughly characteristic Joyce ever wrote. It is, of course, a praise of the *wisdom of fools*, the *folle d'amore*, the divine intoxication by which in every age the idealist burns his bridge and plunges headlong toward the compelling Source of his dream. Its moral was to do great things—or peradventure little things—for Love, not counting the cost; like Jeanne the superwoman on one side, or on the other like "Christ's plaything, Brother Juniper":

What distant mountains thrill and glow
  Beneath our Lady Folly's tread?
Why has she left us, wise in woe,
  Shrewd, practical, uncomforted?

We cannot love or dream or sing,
  We are too cynical to pray,
There is no joy in anything
  Since Lady Folly went away . . .

Joyce used to say that he was "glad when people saw that *Folly* was a religious poem." It was more than this: it was a revealing poem. It revealed the fact that this successful young journalist and popular poet was at soul a mystic. Perhaps it was sorrow, or perhaps it was joy—or perhaps it was both together—which brought him this sacred initiation into life. In any case he was true to it; true even unto death.

Close beside *Folly* should be grouped, among the earlier poems, *Pennies, St. Laurence*, and those strangely prophetic lines called *Poets.* The pages of *Main Street* are very rumorous of the strain. Sometimes, as in *The Robe of Christ*, it is a mystical study of temptation. In that splendid *Apology* it is the Crusader cry again. But in *Gerard Hopkins* it is the old Teresian thirst for martyrdom—

O bleeding feet, with peace and glory shod!
  O happy moth, that flew into the Sun!

Those who knew Joyce Kilmer best, can bear testimony to the enormous sincerity of this religious, even this ascetic, emotion: although it was even less frequent upon his lips than in his song. He was one of those many-sided natures—happily they are less rare than is commonly supposed—who could harmoniously combine simplicity and worldly wisdom, human tenderness and a quick sense of humor, artistic eminence and a most ardent and honest piety. To the spirit of the Church Catholic, into which he and his young wife Aline had been received in 1913, he was beautifully obedient. He was a normal, youthful, healthy child of God, and there was no sensuous beauty in all nature to which he did not quickly respond. Neither was there anything he detested much more thoroughly than "cant" or mock-heroics. Like most human beings, he wanted all the happiness God would let him have —and perhaps a little more. But he was in the habit of receiving daily Communion, and he had an incorrigible, if secret, fondness for the Counsels of Perfection!

It was the peaceful side of his mysticism which gave spur to most of the religious poems. Joyce habitually thought, and spoke, of holy things with a most simple and engaging intimacy, and he brought into the much-abused field of religious verse not only an impassioned sincerity but the rarer virtue of an impassioned originality. He found for the

Most Potent Virgin a new title when he saluted her as *the Singing Girl,* while St. Michael became a "thorn on the rosebush of God." Into the crowded ways of the city streets—as, later, into the trenches overseas—he took Christ and His bright saints with him. And so he was able to give us such lyrics as *Annunciation,* or that blithe ballad *Gates and Doors,* with its bold and beautiful opening—

> There was a gentle hostler
> (And blessèd be his name!)
> He opened up the stable
> The night Our Lady came.
> Our Lady and St. Joseph,
> He gave them food and bed,
> And Jesus Christ has given him
> A glory round his head—

which only Mr. Belloc, perhaps, of all other living poets, could have written. And he was able to sing that precious song of *Roses,* a thing of such tender sweetness that it would have graced the lips of Chaucer's gentle Prioress:—

> I went to gather roses and twine them in a ring,
> For I would make a posy, a posy for the King.
> I got a hundred roses, the loveliest there be,
> From the white rose vine and the pink rose bush and
> from the red rose tree.
> But when I took my posy and laid it at His feet

I found He had His roses a million times more
sweet.
There was a scarlet blossom upon each foot and
hand,
And a great pink rose bloomed from His side for
the healing of the land.
Now of this fair and awful King there is this
marvel told,
That He wears a crown of linkèd thorns instead of
one of gold.
Where there are thorns are roses, and I saw a line
of red,
A little wreath of roses around His radiant head.
A red rose is His Sacred Heart, a white rose is
His face,
And His breath has turned the barren world to a
rich and flowery place.
He is the Rose of Sharon, His gardener am I,
And I shall drink His fragrance in Heaven when
I die.

Joyce Kilmer had reached just this milestone when his fine energies were drawn into the maelstrom of the Great War. All the chivalry of his nature sprang like a sword to the defence of outraged humanity. His poem, *The White Ships and the Red*, written in a single day and published in the *New York Times* shortly after the destruction of the Lusitania, must have played a vivid part in coloring public opinion. His sonnet to Rupert Brooke was prophetic almost in every line of the sacrifice he was himself so soon to make—

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JOYCE KILMER

In alien earth, across a troubled sea,
His body lies that was so fair and young.
His mouth is stopped, with half his songs unsung;
His arm is still, that struck to make men
free . . .

The *New School* and *Mid-Ocean in War Time* and the poignant brevity of *Kings* showed again where his song was leading. Then, in the spring of 1917, our country ranged herself definitely with the Crusader nations, and the call was for *men.* Less than three weeks later, Joyce had tossed aside every consideration of temporal advancement, of prudence, of the heartstrings, enlisting as a private in the Seventh (New York) Regiment. By August, in order that he might be sooner at the front, he obtained a transfer to the "Fighting Sixty-ninth" or, as it was to be known, the One Hundred and Sixty-fifth United States Infantry. And with these, in October, he sailed for France.

Life had not smoothed the path for him. Within six weeks of his departure he had seen his little daughter Rose gathered by the Divine Gardener, and had welcomed a little new-born son, Christopher. But his hand was set irrevocably to the ploughshare, and he went on—smiling. That he did contrive to smile all through the hardships of that long winter in France his letters home seemed to prove. At first, Private Kilmer had acted as statistician in the office of the regimental adjutant. But he longed to

follow his heart and his song to the very thick of the fight; and he gave neither himself nor anybody else any peace until he was again transferred, this time to the perilous and fascinating work of the Intelligence Section. Here he was happy—here he won all hearts. Major Esler, the supply sergeant of Joyce's regiment, gives of those days the sort of detail one might expect: "He would always be doing more than his orders called for—that is, getting much nearer to the enemy's positions than any officer would ever be inclined to send him. Night after night he would lie out in No Man's Land, crawling through barbed wires, in an effort to locate enemy positions and enemy guns, and tearing his clothes to shreds. On the following day he would come to me for a new uniform!"

What was he thinking of, through those days of strenuous service, those nights of thrilling vigilance? Of all the old things, perhaps, but with new vehemence and a new perspective.* He refused absolutely to make "copy" of his experiences, declaring that he wanted to write about the War only the sort of books people might care to read "a century after it is over." "To tell the truth" (as he told "Bob" Holliday) "I am not at all interested in writing nowadays, except in so far as writing is the expression of something beautiful. And I see daily and nightly the expression of beauty in action

* See his *Letters*, included in the *Memorial Edition* of his *Works*.

instead of words, and I find it more satisfactory." So he worked on, and played, and did not forget how to laugh. To one friend, during the spring of 1918, he sent the picture of a delectable Gallic Harlequin, whimsically declaring this to be "the new uniform of the American troops in France"—which he, for one, found very comfortable! But his soul sent its message in one of the very few poems he wrote on foreign soil, that most direct, most manly and most saintly *Prayer of a Soldier in France*:

My shoulders ache beneath my pack,
(Lie easier, Cross, upon His back.)
I march with feet that burn and smart,
(Tread, Holy Feet, upon my heart.)
Men shout at me who may not speak,
(They scourged Thy back and smote Thy cheek.)
I may not lift a hand to clear
My eyes of salty drops that sear.
(Then shall my fickle soul forget
Thy agony of Bloody Sweat?)
My rifle hand is stiff and numb,
(From Thy pierced palm red rivers come.)
Lord, Thou didst suffer more for me
Than all the hosts of land and sea.
So let me render back again
This millionth of Thy gift! Amen.

It is sweet to recall that during his last month of May, Joyce was given a brief respite from the hardship and the horror, and sent up to a mountain

spot "among pines and firs—very lovely, indeed!" as he put it. Here he was resting: which means that he was working only six hours a day; and he seems to have remembered to send messages to almost everyone who ever called him friend. He even remembered to have his photograph taken; could he have suspected, one wonders, how preciously those crude little cardboards would be treasured when he had kept his coming "rendezvous with death"? It was evidently about the time of this furlough, also, that he wrote one of the most remarkable letters ever sent by a soldier in action, the letter to Father Garesché quoted earlier in this paper. It mentions serenely the comfort of living in a land where one is reminded "in every room of every house, and at every cross road, of the Faith"—also his "intensely interesting" work in the Intelligence Section —closing with these really momentous words: "Pray for me . . . that I may love God more and be unceasingly conscious of Him. That is the greatest desire I have."

He was ready, very ready for the accolade of blood. He seems even to have thirsted for it. It is known now how on that ultimate thirtieth of July, Joyce was serving outside his own battalion, having learned that the latter was not to be in the forefront of the great Ourcq attack. "He was at the very front, and he was there not because he had to be but because he wanted to be," wrote Sergeant Alexander

Wollcott, who, of course, had known Joyce when both were staff contributors to the New York *Times*. His account of the epilogue to Joyce's tragedy will stand repetition here for its wealth of graphic first-hand detail:

"I wish I could find words adequate to tell you how deep and genuine was the regiment's sense of loss in his death. I was with them in the woods the day they came out of the line to catch their breaths, and the news of Kilmer's death greeted me at every turn. The captain under whom he had been serving for several months, the major at whose side he fell, stray cooks, doughboys, runners—all shook their heads sorrowfully and talked among themselves of what a good soldier he had been and what an infinite pity it was that the bullet had had to single him out. And in such days as these there are no platitudes of polite regret. When men, good men and close pals, are falling about you by hundreds, when every man in the regiment has come out of the fight the poorer for the loss of not one but many friends, there is no time to say pretty things about a man just because he exists no longer. Death is too common to distinguish any one . . . I gathered that his stock among men of all ranks had been climbing steadily from the first days when many of them, including myself, felt that he was out of his element in a rip-roaring regiment. As the regiment's laureate, they all knew him, and they

knew, too, that he was at work on a history of the regiment. He had become quite an institution, with his arms always full of maps as they used to be full of minor poetry, and his mouth always full of that imperishable pipe."

Joyce had written his own *Vale,* had written it a few months before in memory of some of his regimental brothers "sent west" by a German shell; but the lines were not published until just after his own death. *Rouge Bouquet* is of a noble and plaintive beauty—the beauty of the old Kilmer and the new, the Singing Man turned Fighting Man. And one likes to remember that tired doughboys were carrying this poem about in their pockets long before the critics discovered that it was not only one of the finest things Kilmer had ever created, but in all probability the finest thing achieved by any American poet under the inspiration of the Great War:

In a wood they call the Rouge Bouquet
There is a new-made grave today,
Built by never a spade nor pick
Yet covered with earth ten metres thick.
There lie many fighting men,
    Dead in their youthful prime,
Never to laugh nor love again
    Nor taste the summertime.
For Death came flying through the air
And stopped his flight at the dugout stair,
Touched his prey and left them there,
    Clay to clay.

He hid their bodies stealthily
In the soil of the land they fought to free
And fled away.
Now over the grave abrupt and clear
Three volleys ring;
And perhaps their brave young spirits hear
The bugle sing:
"Go to sleep!
Go to sleep!
Slumber well where the shell screamed and fell.
Let your rifles rest on the muddy floor,
You will not need them any more.
Danger's past;
Now at last,
Go to sleep!"

There is on earth no worthier grave
To hold the bodies of the brave
Than this place of pain and pride
Where they nobly fought and nobly died.
Never fear but in the skies
Saints and angels stand
Smiling with their holy eyes
On this new-come band.
St. Michael's sword darts through the air
And touches the aureole on his hair
As he sees them stand saluting there,
His stalwart sons;
And Patrick, Brigid, Columkill
Rejoice that in veins of warriors still
The Gael's blood runs.
And up to Heaven's doorway floats,
From the wood called Rouge Bouquet,
A delicate cloud of buglenotes
That softly say:

"Farewell!
Farewell!
Comrades true, born anew, peace to you!
Your souls shall be where the heroes are
And your memory shine like the morning-star.
Brave and dear,
Shield us here,
Farewell!"

Is there a final word to say, after this great cloud of witnesses? If there is, it may well be the *Requiem* written by Father Duffy, high-hearted chaplain of that most faithful regiment: "Joyce was one of those soldiers who had a romantic love of death in battle, and it could not have missed him in time. He volunteered his aid to Major Donovan in the line, acted as his adjutant when Lieutenant Ames was killed, went forward with the Major in attack when he could honorably have remained at duties behind, and met his death. . . . God rest his noble soul!" It was not that Joyce was merely a hot-headed enthusiast, not given to counting the cost. He had declared shortly before leaving the States—and he believed it, even though it might not be wholly true—that "only an enlightened man and only a good man" could be really brave. He also believed, and was never to live into disenchantment, that he and the men fighting by his side were *peace-makers*—that "by new and bloody paths" the world was stumbling again upon "the old road to Para-

dise" . . . Up this steep road he himself charged in the vanguard. He did not lose, but gave, his life.

It is told by one close friend who used to question Joyce about his conversion, that he "liked to feel he had always been a Catholic." It would be hard, truly, to find a more characteristic exemplar of the *anima naturaliter Christiana* in modern life. He was both Catholic and catholic. On the human side he was amazingly inclusive in his tastes; he liked nearly all sorts of people—only, in each sort it was the best he liked. He kept the same sane balance in artistic things, loving "whatsoever things are lovely," alike old and new, simple or profound. Prose and verse he wrote with almost equal facility; and, which is saying perhaps more, he could write ballad or "free verse" with almost equal charm. On the religious side he was at once very proud and very humble—humble as a little child, infinitely trusting his Father and his Mother, hence neither afraid nor ashamed of his toys. The pride was of heroic timber, a sort of sublimated *noblesse oblige*, urging him on to the highest fulfillment of all his Faith implied. He was quite ready to follow his Lady Folly unfalteringly, though she led, indeed, to the Wood of all Burned Bridges! More than once his more intimate friends had been startled to hear upon Joyce Kilmer's usually smiling or sententious lips some sudden doctrine of the most extreme renunciation—like the shadow of a half-anticipated

Calvary falling across a garden gay with poppies or blue with the beckoning gentian. . . . He had summed up and made his own that death-in-life which is the eternal paradox of Catholicism. All the human things life offered, love and home and friends and fine work, he took and deliberately sacramentalized. Then, at the call of what he believed the greater need, the greater good, he deliberately crucified them. The thought was not new to him; is it new to any Christian poet? It is the root of all costly mysticism, and, years before, he himself had put it into two unforgettable lines—

> They shall not live who have not tasted death,
> They only sing who are struck dumb by God!

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY

IT WAS on November 2, 1920, the great feast day of all freed souls, that "the little delicate kiss of death"—as she herself had once called it—came to Louise Imogen Guiney. And it must have come much in the way she would have wished: without publicity or pageant, in a very old and quiet corner of the old England she had so greatly loved. One may divine with what courtesy her chastened spirit would welcome that shadowy Sister of us all. "We make a miserable, noisy, farcical entry, one by one, on the terrene stage," she wrote long ago with triste humor; "it is a last dramatic decency that we shall learn to bow ourselves out with gallantry, be it even among the drugs and pillows of a too frequent lot . . . The soul meets its final opportunity, as at a masked ball; if it cannot stand and salute, to what end were its fair faculties given?" There spoke the daughter of her soldier father, and in native heroic spirit. But with her "salute," there passed from among us a poet and scholar of rare distinction: a woman whose worth to contemporary culture was far above rubies because of her delicate and unswerving fidelity to the

strict canons of her chosen art—an artist whose ultimate gift even to a secular world lay in that supreme rightness of vision which, in the last analysis, owes less to the intellect than to the spiritual experience and intuitions.

The New World and the Old were curiously interblended in Miss Guiney's story. For she was born in Boston on January 7, 1861, and the formal process of her education was accomplished with the Religious of the Sacred Heart at Providence, Rhode Island. Yet one thinks of her as essentially Oxonian in genius—and her father, Patrick Robert Guiney, was of Irish birth. She was "well fathered" in the truest possible sense, since General Guiney stood as ideal, as well as idol, to his only child. He had served his apprenticeship as lawyer and as editor, when the Civil War called him. There he acquitted himself with such high courage that he attained the rank of Major General, and upon his return to Boston he was appointed prothonotary of that city. But already, at the Battle of the Wilderness, he had received his death-wound; and thirteen years later, as he was crossing the Common, returning from his office, the never-unexpected summons came. Some children saw General Guiney kneel quietly beside a tree and cross himself—and there Death found him, barely in his forty-third year.

The daughter fell heir to a nature singularly like her father's, with almost every outer episode re-

versed. His was the "short life in the saddle," for which her "Knight Errant," like many another eager knight, had prayed. Hers was to be the longer, harder, not less heroic way of the fireside and the study. Hers was in all truth that *crucifixion of the pen* which she used often to quote: "It comes to that," she said once to the present writer, "but it is still the finest game in the world." As early as 1885 she was writing for publication; the *Goose-quill Papers*, which date from then, being such youthful experiments that they make shift to appear quite the oldest things she ever perpetrated! Two years later she was writing with scholarly ease and a most engaging freshness, inaugurating that honorable career in letters which was to cover practically all her remaining life. Her friendships with contemporaries in the various arts—with the Stedmans, Charles Warren Stoddard, Ralph Adams Cram, Alice Brown, Katharine Tynan, the Meynells, to mention but a few—were many and deep, but at no time was the outward story very thrilling.

From 1894 to 1897 she acted as post-mistress in her home town, the Puritan and not-too-peaceful suburb of Auburndale, Massachusetts. There was a certain bitter humor bound up in her incumbency. Newspaper-reporters and curiosity-seekers, who had to be "swept off the postoffice ledge," constituted one plague; but "I suppose," as she whimsically observed, "it is jolly funny to see how a fish earns its

living by flying." To the same friend she wrote during this time: "I know exactly how a leopard feels behind his bars; or how he might feel if the populace inquired for correspondence and stamps. With all my Websterian brain set upon what I am at, I have never yet made twice six anything but nineteen, nor remembered a face a second time." Meanwhile her outdoor heart was pining for the free day, when she might roam for long green miles "with the best and biggest of dogs, and see snakes (for which I have a liking, if for nothing else than to atone for the behavior towards them of superstitious Christians since Eden gates were locked) and pluck violets . . . thinking what an excellent world it is to do nothing in, and to sing thanks for."

It was sufficiently bad, this daily servitude which held the poet back from singing thanks: but it was made much worse by human unkindness. For, from first to last, the young Catholic post-mistress had to meet a pitifully provincial and puerile opposition, due chiefly to religious (!) bigotry. She faced it squarely, and through the help of personal friends she even conquered a local boycott of the postoffice. But immediately after the vindication of her reappointment by President McKinley, she resigned with what must have been either a diapason or a war-whoop of relief.

Thenceforth, with only such interruptions "as are human," Louise Guiney lived as servant and

master of her beloved craft. Her happiest years, doubtless, were those spent in scholarly seclusion at Oxford, which was her home—but for a few intervals—almost until the end. Here the treasures of the Bodleian were her daily joy; here the editing of old poets became almost as natural and sweet a thing as dreaming among old towers and "long-dedicated walls," or walking in spirit with those great souls, the *Oxford Movers*, who had brought the ancient Catholic heritage back to English-speaking men and women. The heart has not only, in the Frenchman's word, its own reasons—it has also its own ancestry and fatherland. To dwell with these is to *achieve oneself* harmoniously; to be and to do one's best without the perpetual warring against adverse trifles—the voyaging "in shallows and in miseries"—of so many lives banished from the Garden of God's gracious design.

This daughter of New England recaptured her Eden within sound of Tom the "King bell," and where Newman's memory "hangs like a shield on royal Oriel." Oxford was hers by every natural and spiritual affinity, and she celebrated its glories in a series of sonnets which seem in some mysterious fashion to be carved instead of written. Of such expatriations, and of the voyaging heart in general, Miss Guiney gave in *Patrins* the true but not always seen significance.

"The tourist [she declares] be he of right mettle, falls in love with the world, and with the Will which sustains it. As much solace or exhilaration as comes into the eye and ear, so much evil, in the form of sadness, rebellion, ignorance, passes out from us, as breathed breath into the purer air. There is but one thing which can honorably draw the heart out of an American in Europe. He has wrought for himself the white ideal of government; he belongs to a growing, not a decaying society; there is much without upon which he looks with wonder and even with pity. But one thing he sees far away which he can never live to call his, in the West; he cannot transfer hither the yesterday of his own race, the dark charm of London, the glamour of Paris, the majesty and melancholy of Rome.

"And that which makes the worthy pilgrim into an exile and a cosmopolite is no vanity, no ambition, no mere restless energy; it is truly the love of man which calleth overseas, and from towers a great way off. His shrine is some common and unregarded place, a medieval stair, it may be, worn hollow as a gourd by the long procession of mortality. That concave stone touches him and makes his blood tingle: it has magic in it, of itself, without a record; for it speaks of the transit of human worth and human voices, both of which Dante makes his Ulysses long for and seek to understand. It is our sunken footfall, ages ere we were born, while we were on forgotten errands, nursing irrecoverable thoughts. To have marked it, with perhaps the largest emotion of our lives, is to walk Broadway or a Texan tow-path humbler and better ever after."

So that the magnetism of Oxford was the same, "in the natural order," as that which kept her always in such stainless allegiance to the Catholic Church. She left her towered paradise to remain in Massachusetts during her mother's last illness. When that duty was acquitted, she returned again "home" —and there the Great War found her in 1914. It was never quite the same Oxford after that: but then, it has never been quite the same world, either. In a letter written during the first dark winter, she spoke of going for awhile "away from the troops and the refugees and the wounded, for one never sees an undergraduate any more," and taking a borrowed collie as comrade in long walks through the "muddy but tranquil country." More and more cloistral, more and more abdicant became her life. Even the London episodes grew rare, "a day at longest," as she said; and after a time she retired across country to the deeper solitude of Grangeleigh in quiet Amberly. But it was at the little town of Chipping-Campden, some twenty-five miles out of Gloucester, that her pilgrimage was suddenly found to have attained its goal. The Beauty and Antiquity which she craved were hers to the end—and with her, too, were

> They to whom the heavens must ope;
> Candor, Chastity and Hope.

Because Louise Imogen Guiney was so consummate an artist and craftsman, it is encouraging for lesser workers to note that her first efforts in both prose and verse were comparatively negligible. The *Goosequill Papers* (1885), while notable for the beauty of their quaint and finished English, are perhaps the only things she ever wrote which could not triumphantly acquit themselves of a slight pedantry: but, then, is it not youth all the world over which seeks the jocund stateliness of the stilt? And if *The White Sail* poems of 1887 show already the author's classic affiliations, they give no hint at all of the very original, pungent, yet peaceful harmonies she was to achieve a few years later.

But in that same 1887, she contributed to *The Catholic World* an article, called "A King of Shreds and Patches," which was later expanded into that celebrated piece of serio-comedy, *An Inquirendo into the Wit and Other Good Parts of His Late Majesty, King Charles Second.* And from a paper published during the following year, came the deft and delectable little volume of 1892, *Monsieur Henri*, a study of the Vendéan war and of its hero, Henri de la Rochejaquelein. In 1893, *The Roadside Harp* was struck: the first book of her authentic poetry, and one which contributed to her fastidious final collection such charming and characteristic pieces as the "Song of the Lilac," "Tryste Noël," the London Sonnets, and "A Friend's Song for Simoi-

sius." Its opening poem was one of Miss Guiney's few New England inspirations, the legendary tale of Peter Rugg, the Bostonian. But one felt in it, as again in the story of Kenelm, the boy-martyr, that her truest *métier* was not in narrative verse.

A *Little English Gallery*, with its discerning portraits of Lady Danvers, Farquhar, Vaughan, and other "seventeenth-centurions" straying over into the eighteenth, was published in 1894, its most memorable inclusion being the exhaustive and sympathetic study of William Hazlitt. The year 1897 saw the fulfillment of her long cherished desire to edit the poems of James Clarence Mangan, with a really notable memoir of the hapless young Irishman. The whole work was most affectionately perfected, a reverent and royal tribute to one of Apollo's beloved "might have beens * * * poets, bred in melancholy places, under disabilities, with thwarted growth and thinned voices," whom the world would forget save for another poet's gentle pen. The same year brought her precious book of original fancies, *Patrins,* one of the most delightful volumes imaginable, and one which every essay-lover will want to place between his *Elia* and Stevenson's "laughing gold ten times tried."

The poet came again to the fore in 1899 with her slender volume, *The Martyr's Idyl.* The title-poem, a dramatic version of the story of SS. Theodora and Didymus, was a thing of noble and deli-

cate beauty, yet scarcely so successful as many of the shorter lyrics included—the Ignatian battle-cry, *"Deo Optimo Maximo,"* for instance, "The Outdoor Litany," or that tender fragment, "By the Trundle-Bed." Once overseas, her work took the form of a few scattered lyrics and of much felicitous biographical and editorial work. *Robert Emmet: His Rebellion and Romance* came in 1904, also the much documented memoir of *Hurrell Froude*; and, later on, the world was to be enriched by her really exquisite editing of the work of Henry Vaughan, Thomas Stanley and the "Matchless Orinda," among our fragrant forebears—and among the moderns, by that of Matthew Arnold, Lionel Johnson and others. All this work, exhaustive and exhausting as it must have been, spells singular self-abnegation in a poet. But Louise Guiney had the scholar's temper, serene under infinite patient research, so that these labors were probably dictated as much by literary piety as by the exactions of what she used Franciscanly to mention as "Holy Poverty."

Her beautiful Englishing of the *Fioretti* was, alas! never published. But she left one starlike piece of hagiography, her *Blessed Edmund Campion* in 1908—a saint's life written with equal devotion and intelligence, even such a model for modern readers as Francis Thompson's superb *Life of St. Ignatius*. In 1909, feeling that her poetic legacy

was practically complete, Miss Guiney gathered into one precious book, *Happy Ending*, what she modestly called "all the better nuggets in that disused mine." And in a letter written during one of the final years, she tells of a fruit which should by now be white to the harvesting—her "pegging away on a huge Anthology, *Recusant Poets*," with Father Bliss, S. J.

Louise Imogen Guiney was essentially a poet, and as a poet she will be treasured. But her prose work both antedated and survived the poetic utterance. This is not, of course, unusual in the history of letters. The gift of song seldom lasts through a lifetime—even when the singer mistakenly fancies it to endure. "The Magical White Bird" is snared but for a little season, then flutters off with the morning wind from its captor's hand. But in the captor's heart the memory of its music remains evermore. In fact, Prose, that sturdier sister of Poetry, needs no excuse at all for her comely endurance. She may often enough be forced into Martha's duties; she may even perform them passing well. But she can sit with all grace at her Lord's feet, meditating the essential things, when persuaded by so firm and knowing an artist as the author of *Patrins*.

So Miss Guiney became and became recognized as a critic of almost infallible rightness; an appreciative yet temperate judge, not only of literary

excellence, but (far more difficult of discernment!) of the subtle, underlying canons of literary ethics. To be sure, her personal taste was all toward what one calls the "classic" school, even as her personal temperament inclined toward that New England reticence which she herself often described as "shyness." She was congenitally opposed to the spectacular, either in life or literature, believing that "'to make a scene' is not mannerly even on paper." Yet she had every sympathy with the holy, but hectic and unfulfilled, genius of Digby Dolben, and devoted years to the rehabilitation of such rueful and romantic Celts as Mangan and Robert Emmet.

All this proves simply that she was finely human in her sympathies. Exigent she was of honesty in soul and utterance—intolerant of the artist who gave less than his best. But for all her seeming aloofness, she knew men as well as books, and her criticism constantly insists upon the close relation between abstract and concrete good. This is the whole argument of her arraignment of "Wilful Sadness in Literature"; the fact that both ethics and esthetics must make their rules for the many rather than the few, that "it may well seem a sort of treachery in a man of genius to speak aloud at all, in our vast society of the desponding and unspiritual, unless he can speak the helping word." And here is her sentence upon the ultra-realists:

"The play which leaves us miserable and bewildered, the harrowing social lesson leading nowhere, the transcript from commonplace life in which nothing is admirable but the faithful skill of the author —these are bad morals because they are bad art. With them ranks the invertebrate poetry of two or three generations ago, which has bequeathed its sickly taint to its successor in popular favor, our modern minor fiction * * * Art is made of seemly abstinences. The moment it speaks out fully, lets us know all, ceases to represent a choice and a control of its own material, ceases to be, in short, an authority and a mystery, and prefers to set up for a mere Chinese copy of life—just so soon its birthright is transferred."

Another capital example of sensitive critical insight is found in Louise Imogen Guiney's contrast of English and Irish genius, both of which she understandingly loved—the superman set over against the superrace:

"England has, by the world's corroboration, her divine sons, whose names are in benediction. But she has also a Sahara spectacle of the most stolid, empty folk in the universe; the sapless, rootless, flowerless millions who pay, as it were, for Shakespeare and Shelley * * * for Newton and Darwin. Easy, is it not, for the superlative quality to form and act in fullest power here and there, in a nation where no smallest grain of it is ever wasted on the common mortal? But Ireland reeks with genius impartially distributed. It is infectious; every one

suffers from it, in its various stages and manifestations. The "Superior race" makes the superior individual impossible. Nowhere the lonely planetary effulgence; everywhere the jovial defiant twinkle of little stars!"

In one of her greatest essays, "The Under Dog," Miss Guiney pierces to the heart of several universal yet shadowy truths—of the folly of any attempt to gauge such mysteries as human failure and success; of the different kinds of saints, those "who attain their only legitimate development in the cloister," and those who are by every count "Saints at a Sacrifice"; and of that strange ghost, "something extra-rational, we may be sure: something with an august enchantment," which meets certain of the cursed or the elect upon their way, making (in Thompson's word) "the kind earth waste, and breath intolerable" forevermore!

Over and over again, in fact, the deep waters of this woman's habitual thought make many a recent critic show naked in his shallowness. For her sympathy was linked always with sound scholarship; even with a painstaking exhaustiveness which led her in some of the earlier studies into a fulness one would scarcely trust to our hasty contemporary readers. At no time, indeed, does she write that he who runs may read—for why, after all, should anyone expect to read running? But her later prose achieves a really superb condensation. And this beautiful,

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY

habitual infallibility has made of Miss Guiney's work a very mine of epithet. Alike in her prose and verse, she has the brief, perfect word for so many men, so many things! One remembers on one side Congreve's "quicksilver wit"; on the other young Digby Dolben "pole-vaulting his way into the inner Court of the King"; Hurrell Froude, "the lost Pleiad of the Oxford Movement"; or Pascal—"O rich in all forborne felicities!" And for tender, true "impressionism" in nature painting, it would be hard to go beyond her

> . . . free,
> Innocent, magnanimous tree,

and her corner of ancient London, "with its little old bearded graveyards, pools of ancestral sleep; or low-lying, leafy gardens where monks and guildsmen have had their dreams."

Thus to make vivid the soul of things is to be a poet; to express the image rhythmically is to write poetry. And if Louise Imogen Guiney's critical energy became—inevitably—a danger to her more creative gift, it at least insured that gift of fastidious, if infrequent, use. She herself, in the volume called *Happy Ending,* chose and set apart the poetry, alike early and late, by which she would be judged; building up a book which, in a sense far truer than the opulent Patmore's, might boast only

of her "best"—a creamy collection, which no lover of the highest in the century just passed can afford to miss. It is not a popular poetry, even as that of her comrade in arms and ideals, Lionel Johnson, was not a popular poetry. Neither is it exotic, nor at all sensational. But it has a free and swinging music, and the beauty of very tall trees washed in moonlight. If ever the cry of the Valkyrie turned Crusader rang through our contemporary poetry it is in that galloping masterpiece, "The Wild Ride":

I hear in my heart, I hear in its ominous pulses
All day, on the road, the hoofs of invisible horses,
All night, from their stalls, the importunate pawing
and neighing.
Let cowards and laggards fall back! but alert to the
saddle
Weather-worn and abreast, go men of our galloping
legion,
With a stirrup-cup each to the lily of women that
loves him.
The trail is through dolour and dread, over crags
and morasses;
There are shapes by the way, there are things that
appal or entice us:
What odds? We are Knights of the Grail, we are
vowed to the riding.

* * * * *

A dipping of plumes, a tear, a shake of the bridle,
A passing salute to this world and her pitiful beauty:
We hurry with never a word in the track of our
fathers.

(I hear in my heart, I hear in its ominous pulses
All day, on the road, the hoofs of invisible horses,
All night, from their stalls, the importunate pawing
and neighing.)
We spur to a land of no name, out-racing the storm-
wind;
We leap to the infinite dark like sparks from the
anvil.
Thou leadest, O God! All's well with Thy troopers
that follow.

Like "The Kings," like, indeed, practically all of Miss Guiney's work, this is a high-headed as well as a high-hearted poetry: ethical even in its motivation of external Nature—of "Cobwebs," of "A Footpath Morality," with its gentle scorn of

Poor lagging man, content to be
Sick with the impact of eternity.

It is scarcely aware of sex, and is but little concerned with the storm and stress, the gusts and glee of our sweet, irrational existences. To use the simile of another art, it deals with the form, not the color of life. Back in the *Roadside Harp,* the young Louise Guiney had achieved the high-water mark of an unfaltering philosophy, which she put into verse as her "Talisman":

Take Temperance to thy breast,
While yet is the hour of choosing,
As arbitress exquisite
Of all that shall thee betide;

For better than fortune's best
Is mastery in the using,
And sweeter than anything sweet
The art to lay it aside.

Theoretically, of course, this is the last word of wisdom, worthy to be carved in jade or beryl. But there is no denying that it is better piety than poetry. Let it be admitted frankly that the poet's best verse does not come out of that costly virtue of *detachment*—it comes out of the still more costly virtue of *attachment* . . . To this are we debtor for all her true and impassioned reading of Nature: the stormy beauty of "The Squall," with its "routed leopards of the lightning," the tranquil beauty of "Monochrome," the dew-drenched memories of the "Lilac" song. To it, again, we owe the five lovesome Christmas carols; the subtle Carol of Gifts, the curious Carol of the "Soule from farre away," the Carol of the Ox and the Ass, and perhaps most wistful of all, the one originally called "Tryste Noël":

The Ox he openeth wide the Doore,
And from the Snowe he calls her inne,
And he hath seen her Smile therefor,
Our Ladye without Sinne.
Now soone from Sleep
A Starre shall leap,
And soone arrive both King and Hinde;
Amen, Amen:
But O, the place co'd I but finde!

The Ox hath hush'd his voyce and bent
Trewe eyes of Pitty ore the Mow,
And on his lovelie Neck, forspent,
The Blessed layes her Browe.
Around her feet
Full Warme and Sweete
His bowerie Breath doth meeklie dwell:
Amen, Amen:
But sore am I with Vaine Travèl!

The Ox is host in Judah stall
And Host of more than onelie one,
For close she gathereth withal
Our Lorde her littel Sonne.
Glad Hinde and King
Their Gyfte may bring,
But wo'd tonight my Teares were there,
Amen, Amen:
Between her Bosom and His hayre!

Louise Imogen Guiney was a "minor" poet, but she wrote in the great major tradition of English verse: the tradition of Arnold, of Wordsworth, of Shelley and their predecessors. She achieved almost perfectly the thing she wanted to do; and if through some temperamental turn she lacked the poet's taste for love songs—well, the love songs have an excellent chance of surviving, none the less! And she did constantly betray that extreme tenderness for animals which is a part of so many seemingly undemonstrative people. There is so much pity, solicitude and passion in this devotedness that one won-

ders (to interpret "psycho-analysis" rather more spaciously and spiritually than Freud!) if it be not just a slight deflection of the maternal instinct. In any case, it permeates Miss Guiney's work, from the prose "Reminiscences of a Fine Gentleman" to the naïve "Davy" verses. And it reaches its final expression in a poem of rare beauty and absolutely sincere conviction, "St. Francis Endeth His Sermon":

> And now, my clerks who go in fur and feather
> Or brighter scales, I bless you all. Be true
> To your true Lover and Avenger, whether
> By land or sea ye die the death undue.
> Then proffer man your pardon, and together
> Track him to Heaven and see his heart made new.
> From long ago one hope hath in me thriven,
> Your hope, mysterious as the scented May:
> Not to Himself your titles God hath given
> In vain, nor only for this mortal day.
> O doves! How from the Dove shall ye be driven?
> O darling lambs! Ye with the Lamb shall play.

While at first approach an elusive and aloof personality, there seems to have been about the soul of Louise Imogen Guiney a fresh, fundamental simplicity. She had the "single eye"—a freedom from distraction almost uncanny in that incorrigible General Practitioner, woman! She "hated clothes" as much as any boy of fifteen; she habitually broke rosaries; she described herself as "literally too happy

to live" when exercising on the rings and vaulting-bar of a Swedish gymnasium. And deeply as she adored old poets, she adored—and in *all* weathers—the Open. She had a fine humorous enjoyment, even of being "held up" by a Boston pick-pocket, and her courage, both moral and physical, was unbounded. She had no patience at all with distortions of the truth in any controversy, and "struck straight from the shoulder," even with her dearest friends. But to them, as to the ideals she had chosen and sifted, she was as faithful as one of her own St. Bernard dogs. One thinks of sincerity as the keynote of her character—a fastidious sincerity—until one remembers that it was rather *consecration.* Yes, that is the word . . . Hers was a hidden life, consecrated as that of any nun. She used to speak of her Catholic Faith as "a frightful responsibility," declaring over and over again with the most touching humility that it was "we ourselves—our worldliness, our indifference, and general unthankful demeanor," which kept other groping souls from the wished-for Light. Through her own life and all her work, the great Candle shone unflinchingly. She walked the changing ways of a much changing century with the eyes of her own Risen ones, *Beati Mortui:*

Blessed the dead in spirit, our brave dead
Not passed, but perfected:
Who tower up to mystical full bloom
From self, as from a known alchemic Tomb;

Who out of wrong
Run forth with laughter and a broken thong;
Who win from pain their strange and flawless grant
Of peace anticipant;
Who cerements lately wore of sin, but now,
Unbound from foot to brow,
Gleam in and out of cities, beautiful
As sun-born colors of a forest pool
Where Autumn sees
The splash of walnuts from her thinning trees.

PAUL CLAUDEL, MYSTIC AND DRAMATIST

JUST a little while before the cataclysm of the earthquake, and while Paul Claudel was still official representative from the French Republic to the Court of Japan, news came that his "NO" drama concerning a Woman and Her Shadow had been captivating Japanese audiences at once by its poetic message and by its fidelity to a quaint and exotic form of art. He is always doing things like that—things that are both very timely and very unexpected. When he was living in the United States he wrote a problem play of almost shocking realism (which, by the by, has never been published in English!) and when he lived in China he produced a colossal poetic drama steeped not only in oriental romance but also in oriental necromancy. And this highly experimental Frenchman, who once described the stage as "a platform trembling under the impetuous feet of exuberant youth," is probably best known all over the world as author of *The Tidings Brought to Mary,* a Christian miracle-play startling only in its solemn and almost liturgical beauty of line and action.

Literature and diplomacy have gone hand in hand

for many an ambling century, but it is not often—even in France—that men or angels are offered the spectacle of a dramatist, a poet and a transcendental philosopher who is at the same time an ambassador of the first rank. There is, in fact, a versatility about Monsieur Claudel which hardly seems at home in our own highly specialized century. It savors rather of the robust Renaissance, or of the generous and germinal Middle Ages. In many ways, his work stands purposely, even prophetically, aloof from his contemporaries; yet there is scarcely another man whose years have compassed a greater variety of modern thought or modern action.

Paul Claudel was born in Picardy, of a family belonging to the mountainous Vosges region, in 1868—that is to say, when France was at the height of the Romantic movement. His boyhood passed into the era of literary and religious naturalism, and he was crowned by the hand of Renan himself at the conclusion of his course at the celebrated Lycée Louis le Grand. Next, his youth fell under the spell of Mallarmé and Verlaine; although it was rather to the spiritual message of Arthur Rimbaud that he later confessed a "debt of eternal gratitude." Traces of the melancholy delicacy of these Symbolists—or as they were later called, Decadents—abound in his early poems, especially the *Vers d'Exile*. If they filter into his dramas only in rare moments, that is because of strong

counter-influences to which Claudel had submitted before turning playwright. He had, in fact, become exteriorly an active member of the French diplomatic corps; interiorly, an apostle of the most uncompromising and unpopular Catholic mysticism.

He was only twenty-four when first sent over to the United States, being attached for a while to the consulates in Boston and New York. To the virile influences of this new and young civilization Monsieur Claudel was by no means insensible; but in spite of his fondness for very free verse, he has given slight material to those ingenious critics who insist upon pointing out his kinship with Walt Whitman! Philosophically, of course, the two men are as far apart as the poles—Whitman being intrigued first, last and always by the *natural* man (if one may draw so definite a line!) while the French poet is obsessed by the *spiritual* man in his power, his glory or his ignominy. Indeed, Claudel's residence in Tientsin, China, where he was transferred about 1895, proved far more contributory to his literary harvest. The mystery and contemplation of the East—on the one side, its almost liturgical formality; on the other, what he calls the "naïve disorder" of its crowded daily life—penetrated the very spirit of his work. Two of the direct fruits were the picturesque prose sketches of his *Connaissance de l'Est,* and that tremendous Chinese

tragedy somewhat ironically entitled *Le Repos du Septième Jour*.

Later on, Paul Claudel passed to diplomatic posts at Prague and Frankfort-on-the-Main, while the unforgettable August of 1914 found him laboring as consul-general at Hamburg. To the Great War his ardent intelligence reacted with the characteristic versatility of his race. He, who had been declared exotic, promptly revealed himself in most human and practical service. He was dispatched by the French government to Italy during the problematical winter of 1916, and as Minister-Plenipotentiary to Brazil just before that country was persuaded to throw in its lot with the Allies. Over and above these official duties, he found time to write patriotic poems of such passion as the celebrated "*Tout que vous voudrez, mon général*," while his miracle-play, *La Nuit de Noël de 1914*, is probably one of the very few War dramas destined to outlive the War. Being a recognized authority on oriental matters, Monsieur Claudel was recalled to Paris during the summer of the Peace Conference. That autumn he was named French minister to Denmark—from which post he was promoted as ambassador to Tokio. All of which implies that the mystic dramatist is a living man rather than a three-foot library, and accordingly difficult to pigeon-hole.

It would be quite possible, and equally interesting, to study Paul Claudel as a poet—that is to say,

as a writer of formal poems: but after all, his most epochal work, the work which most freely expresses both his philosophy and his humanity, must be found in the varied *"théatre"* bearing his name. And as he has had a frank fondness for second or even third thoughts, not hesitating to publish his plays in successive versions, their chronology is a little teasing. The earliest seems to have been the heroic tragedy of *Tête d' Or,* conceived in his twenty-first year but cast into its present shape about 1894. It is a work of large and loose design, giving three impressionistic scenes from the life of one of earth's conquerors, the hero, the demigod. No hint of his nation nor of his century is given: but in this blue-eyed young warrior, with his indomitable will to live—to "raise himself as a candle before the people," to "span the earth with glory like a rainbow"—there is something of Sigurd the Volsung and more of the Teutonic superman. The final act, where the golden-haired general meets defeat and death upon a rocky height of the Caucasus, is in itself a great tragic poem. At its very beginning the note of contrast is struck—upon one side passing the pageant of Tête d' Or's victorious army, on the other, the half-starved and outcast princess whom he has driven from her throne. In a scene worthy of Hugo at his most ghastly, the woman is discovered by a deserter and nailed by her hands to a nearby tree. But the high, unflinching spirit, the stoic saintliness, which was to

prove so characteristic of Claudel's future message, is distilled into her cry:

> I am nailed to a stake; but my royal soul
> Is not brought low, and so this tree
> Becomes honorable as a throne . . .

Later on, it is Tête d' Or, wounded and left, at his own command, to die, who discovers the princess —who staggers to her side, and having already lost the power of his hands, draws out with his teeth the martyring nails. And so the miracle happens, the illumination of this young, imperious hero whose sun has gone black at noonday. "Behold the courage of the wounded, the strength of the weak," he muses curiously; and then—

> I did not wish that they, the others, should
> look upon my death,
> But man may not hide himself
> From the eyes of the mother—woman!

By touches of a deft but very subtle simplicity, Monsieur Claudel makes us aware that love for Tête d' Or is being born in the princess' heart, that she is strangely glad to have suffered so much for his sake. And at the last, as Tête d' Or bids his returning soldiers clothe her in royal raiment and place the sceptre in "those transfixed hands, sweet as the last sunlight," he makes us aware that she, kneeling down to kiss her royal dead, is very glad to rise no

more from his side. There is peace at last between the man and woman who have warred as brute force and soul force must war to the very end: to the victorious weak and the vanquished strong, death and peace in a final kiss!

No one can be surprised to hear that during the building of this play Claudel was also engaged upon a French translation of the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, since its kinship with the spacious and sombre Greek tragedies is obvious. In fact, he has all along owed much to the classic *spirit* of drama—to its weight of tragic issues, its almost impersonal sense of the eternal verities which must needs be fulfilled. But in *form,* his plays are all things for all effects; at one moment realistic and experimental, doing every possible violence to the canons of French (or any other) dramatic technique; at another, breaking into long choral interludes, or even into the immemorial mould of the Church's liturgy.

Probably the most blatantly modern of all these dramas is *L'Échange,* written during the young diplomat's residence in the States. It has been called his *American* play—rather, one hopes, because the action is cast on this side of the Atlantic than because of any particularly national favor to the plot! For it is a daring and brutal story, grouped about just four characters. First, there is Louis Laine, the wanderer, the weak egoist—in contrast, perhaps, to the strong egoist, Tête d'Or—who sacrifices

himself and everyone else to the momentary whim. At his side is the wife, Marthe, whom he has carried away from her Old World home—a woman with no fault save her utter faultlessness; the *lamp,* as Claudel says, *in whose light he fears to walk!* Over against these two is set a strange pair: the courtesan Lechy Elbernon, and her elderly lover, Thomas Pollock Nageoire, a hard-headed American capitalist who believes that "everything has its price," and is willing to pay full value for what he wants. He also believes, from experience, that divorce is a very present help in time of trouble. There is a rather human inconsistency about Thomas which makes him more credible than the wholly evil Lechy, that superlative "vampire" in whose portrayal Monsieur Claudel spares little in the way of realism. And the *exchange* from which the play is named is Louis' project to transfer his wife to Thomas Pollock—who, curiously enough, both desires and prizes her—while he himself takes Lechy in her place. In one great climactic scene we are shown Marthe, the woman to whom animals and all little children press for help, pleading with the husband not to abandon her, not to go *beyond the reach of her hands to save.* He goes, of course . . . And in the quick terror of the catastrophe, when Louis' body, murdered at the instigation of Lechy in a moment of jealous rage, is brought back to Marthe's arms, the luminous simplicity of the woman glows

like a fixed star. She, who has known with so terrible a clearness all the self-deceit of his self-excusings, forgives him as one forgives a child. With the spirit of Tête d' Or's princess, she, holding only her own soul and her dead, turns calmly to Pollock with the word "I am richer than thou!"

Even these two hastily sketched dramas will not fail to raise the inevitable question: is Claudel's work truly dramatic? Or, rather, since the other answers itself, is it actable? Obviously, it has the element of conflict, the visible development of character; and action, too, although sometimes of a symbolic and indirect sort. The question is, fundamentally, the same one which has all along followed the work of a more popular and more pagan mystic, Maurice Maeterlinck. And it must be answered in the same way—sometimes the plays *are* actable, sometimes they are *not*. Although not yet published in translation, *The Exchange* has been performed in London as well as on the Continent, while *The Tidings Brought to Mary* brought its message to New York only after winning appreciation in France, in Germany, even in Russia. Oftener than one suspects, indeed, these Claudelian dramas are capable of most powerful interpretation in the theatre. But there is no denying that their demands are rather staggering—less to the actors than to an audience already softened emotionally and intellectu-

ally by long fare upon the "movies" or the musical comedy!

Also, there are obvious moments when the poet, the philosopher in Paul Claudel out-tops the dramatist. *Tête d'Or* achieves mightily, but as an epic rather than a dramatic poem. And even the Frenchman's most ardent admirers could scarcely visualize *La Ville* (recently Englished) as anything but a closet drama. Yet this strange study of human government in the symbolic city is worth reading, if only because it creates that poet-bishop, Coeuvre, who becomes a very mouthpiece for Claudel's mystic philosophy. There is nothing new, although there is much that still seems strange, about the system. It has the frightful freshness, the almost inhuman idealism of the early Christians: it is as "ferociously" and militantly Catholic as Mr. Belloc himself. Through the medium of ancient romance or very modern drama, Claudel is preaching the stark "heart-shattering secret" of renunciation—of sacrifice—the costly *science of the saints*. . . . But because it is so simple, it takes strong nerves and a high heart to follow him. There is nothing nebulous or soothing in his doctrines, as in those pleasant pseudo-mysticisms so popular in contemporary journalism and on the contemporary lecture-platform. He offers no tonic, save the immense tonic of a hard-won fight and a hard-held faith. Like Francis Thompson, he has dared to speak in "words

PAUL CLAUDEL

accursed of comfortable men." And yet one feels that he loves these men with a passionate brotherhood, even while hating the habit and the comfort of their compromises.

One of the most extreme examples of Claudel's literary asceticism was his play of Napoleonic times, *The Hostage,* in which he made the *pros* and *cons* of doctrine vital enough to raise a mild storm of controversy on both sides of the Atlantic. For here he portrays the deliberate sacrifice of the heart and body of a woman for the supposed good of the Church: the marriage of Sygne de Coufontaine to a despised and despicable revolutionist, in order that the exiled Pope hiding beneath her roof may be saved. "Have pity upon me, for I am not God but only a woman," cries the tortured girl. And the old priest, who is really full of pity, says simply: "God never asks superficial things from us, my child, but deep ones." . . . But at least this once, Paul Claudel would seem to stand convicted—like the Spanish bishops of old—of being "more Catholic than the Pope." He has stretched the E string too tight. And in the conclusion of this disturbing play, as in the ruin and wreck of its sequel, *Le Pain Dur,* he himself shows that martyr-marriage leading to no good. Sygne, the unwilling "hostage," is the woman who gives at once too much and not enough.

Of course, the miracle play was the predestined medium of this amazing dramatist, but he came to

it by his own Claudelian path. He came first by way of the Chinese drama, *Le Repos du Septième Jour*. It is a work of extreme terror and considerable beauty (not as yet translated into English), with one scene demanding for its *milieu* the very centre of the Chinese Inferno—"the sanctum of Hell, the Paradise of Hate," in Claudel's tremendous phrase. And here the catechism of the living man in the Place of the Dead, with all the profundities of good and evil juggled before us, would be of intolerable weight if it were not for the essential simplicity—essential, but at the heart of a very whirlpool of complexity and involution!—of the poet's thought. And at last, the strange solution of this strange drama is brought by an angel, "wiser than old age, yet more simple than little children."

One may conceivably hold two opinions about Claudel's complete success in *The Sabbath Day's Rest,* but scarcely more than one concerning *The Tidings Brought to Mary.* It is perhaps the most arresting of all modern miracle plays; and like its medieval prototype, it is so true to its mystical intention that one feels certain the author is more interested in the miracle than in the play. Yet he is never merely archaic. The psychology of the story—especially the psychology of the evil sister Mara, with her passionate will to live and to love—is as subtle as the most modern audience could desire. While the drama proved, in its recent New York

production, an ideal vehicle for the symbolistic new stagecraft (as which of Claudel's plays would not?), it was written for more realistic settings. From the first word of the prologue, spoken at midnight, in the great medieval barn of Combernon lighted by one huge yellow candle, an atmosphere of brooding tragedy is projected. The young girl Violaine has stolen out to bid Godspeed to Pierre de Craon, the mighty builder of churches. He loves her—he has loved her even to violence. But she is promised to another whom she herself loves, and it is in pity only that she kisses the man's bent face as he starts upon his journey through the night. What does it signify to her that he has confessed the secret touch of leprosy? For she cries, "God made me to be happy, and not for evil nor any sorrow."

Claudel's women, when they are decent at all, have a unique, unearthly quality not unlike the fragrance of incense, and Violaine is the essence of this pitiful and mysterious charm. As she herself says later, with her terrible wisdom, "Man is the priest, but it is not forbidden woman to be the sacrifice." When she next comes upon the scene, she is walking through a sunlit grove, clothed in the golden dalmatic and diadem which the daughters of Combernon wear upon the day of their bethrothal—and again upon the day of their death. "O my betrothed among the flowery branches, hail!" cries her wait-

ing lover, Jacques Hury. Then, in an exquisitely lyrical scene, the affianced bride feels about for words to tell the grim secret which has come upon her. But Jacques, fancying her merely strange and fickle, protests: "Have pity upon me, who am only a man without wings, who rejoiced in this companion God had given me, and that I should hear her sigh with her head resting upon my shoulder.

Sweet bird! the sky is beautiful, but it is beautiful, too, to be taken captive!

And the sky is beautiful! but this is a beautiful thing too, and even worthy of God, the heart of a man that can be filled, leaving no part empty."

Then Violaine takes a knife, and cutting the linen tunic below her breast, she shows her lover where the first silver flower of leprosy has burned and frozen into her flesh. . . . From this moment, the drama becomes the martyrdom of Violaine the outcast. Suspected by her betrothed, betrayed by her sister, forgotten by all, she finds refuge in a little cave of the far-off rocks. And here, eight years later, that sinister sister, Mara, seeks her out on Christmas eve. She has herself married Jacques— as she always intended to do!—and she is carrying their little dead child for Violaine to heal. For she believes the woman to be a saint, even while hating her and her sanctity! It is the strangest of scenes. Outside the cave sound the shrill trumpets which

herald the young King's passing—the dauphin whom Jeanne D'Arc is leading to Rheims for his coronation. But Violaine does not stir. She is bending her veiled and blinded face over the tiny, rigid form in her arms, while she bids Mara read aloud the Christmas office of the Church. Presently the voices of angels are heard joining in the responses. . . . There is a motion from Violaine, and from the mother a cry—"Violaine, I see something moving under your cloak!" And as dawn breaks outside the cave, the leper woman raises up the living baby and places it in her sister's arms. "Mara," she whispers, "for us, too, a little child is born!"

Any conventional dramatist would have made this exquisite miracle the signal for a general conversion and reconciliation. But Claudel does no such thing. The child lives, but nothing else is changed. Mara still hates, Louis still wavers in his faith; and when at last Violaine meets the death treacherously planned for her, there is only Pierre de Craon to bear the outcast saint home to burial. And it is he who, in that final scene at Combernon, between the music of the mystic Angelus—*the tidings brought to Mary*—and the nails driven into her coffin, pronounces the panegyric of Violaine. He is finishing his shrine of St. Justitia, the fairest and last of all his churches, and it is revealed to him whose form shall crown the work:

"At the summit, in the wide sky, I shall set this other justice,
Violaine the leper in glory, Violaine the blind in the sight of all.
And I shall make her with her hands crossed on her breast,
Like the spike of grain still half-prisoned in its tegmen,
And her eyes blindfolded.
. . . . . .

That seeing not, she may the better hear
The sounds of the city and the fields, and man's voice at the same time as the voice of God.
For she is Justice herself, who listens and conceives in her heart the perfect harmony.
This is she who is a refuge from storms, and a shade from the heat of the rising dog-star . . . "

The whole work is one of profound and pregnant beauty, a drama making no concessions to the audience, real or imaginary, a story which scarcely sees the bodies of its protagonists so absorbed is it in their souls. "Blessed is he who suffers, *and who knows why,*" cries Violaine: and her words sum up the message of Claudel's art in its full maturity. That message, the sacrifice of the idealist for the life of the ideal, filters again and again and again through his work. Tête d' Or's princess, victorious not in life but in death—Marthe, rich because she has nothing left to lose—the fickle Ysé of *Partage de*

Midi, returning to die beside her abandoned lover—the Chinese emperor, blinded by the fires of Purgatory that his people may see—above all, the long martyrdom of the "sweet, sweet Violaine"—bear witness to the same scarcely endurable burden of truth, *He saved others, Himself He could not save . . .*

One can but repeat that there is no novelty in this mystical reading, this persistent sacramentalizing of life. It is sheer reaction from the wisdom of the world, as old as Christianity and perhaps a little older. The radically novel thing is to see it combined with all the best in modernity, with vivid realism and elusive symbolism, with enormous physical and mental activity, and a brooding sympathy with the needs of contemporary life. One curious and compellingly beautiful fruit is found in M. Claudel's *Chemin de la Croix:* his meditations upon the fourteen Stations of the Cross, unforgettable in their nervous, poetic prose and in their poignant blending of drama and devotion. But nowhere, perhaps, is this inclusiveness more apparent than in his brief War play—itself, again, a miracle play—*La Nuit de Noël de 1914,* where the scene shifts from a devastated village just back of Rheims to the "Vestibule of Heaven." It is in one sense his most perfect fusing of drama and mysticism, and it brings two qualities new to his work, simplicity, and an ironic sense of humor. Few who have read it are

liable to forget the Barriesque poignancy of that scene where the souls of the little martyred children, "white as drops of milk," come crowding into the outer court of Heaven, timid and not yet used to so spacious a house—while the young French soldiers, with truly Gallic tact, at first pretend not to see them, and then alternately pet and tease them back to comfort. And just here, where Barrie failed so pitifully in both *Mary Rose* and *The Well Remembered Voice,* Claudel compasses with a single touch the sublimity as well as the nearness of his theme. The soldiers and the murdered curé are asking one another if the moment of death has been painful, and *a smile is the only answer.* . . . "God has mercifully hidden from man, in order that his poor soul may acquire some merit, how little pain there is in leaving earth," muses the old curé: and then—

"Only a great light, like the cleaving of an angel's sword, and behold, reality all about us!
As when on the mountain top the mist lifts suddenly, and we behold Alsace or Lombardy rose-red in the dawn. . . . "

When the first of the Claudel dramas were gathered together in 1901, it was under the somewhat challenging title of *L'Arbre.* Evidently, he himself grouped them as fruits of a tree—the Tree of Life, with roots deep in the secret earth, and leaves high toward the candid sky, and branches stretching out toward the four winds of the world.

But his work is really less like a tree than like one of the medieval French cathedrals—Notre Dame de Paris, or Amiens, or stricken Rheims. His art is never a pretty or well-ordered or sophisticated thing, but vast, beautiful, irregular. It probes first, and then it soars. It deals with subtle yet elemental things, whether its form be romantic or classic or a mingling of both at once. It has always had uncomfortably sharp corners, it has always had baffling gargoyles, it has always had quite pitiless stairways, both up and down. In two words, he is a *Gothic modernist*—as experimental as the youngest poet or the newest theatre, as old and as haunting as Peter the Hermit.

Unique as Claudel's genius is, it is easy enough to point out his affiliations. They are with Bernard of Clairvaux and St. John of the Cross, with Rimbaud and Verlaine and the "vers librists." They are with Coventry Patmore (whose odes he translated into French) and George Meredith and Joseph Conrad—very much with Conrad at moments, except that the Frenchman's tempests deal with the soul only, not the soul and the sea. But he is of such stuff as cults are made of, destined always to give more than he receives. He has been loved and hated, at once for his literary radicalism and his religious conservatism—if, indeed, the Catholic renaissance which he has championed so zealously before modern France and the modern world can be called

conservative. He is the bridge between a Renan, his preceptor, and a Francis Jammes, his disciple.

Somewhere M. Claudel has described motion as the *shivering of matter at the touch of another reality, spirit*—and it is the sort of definition which exactly sums up the sensation produced by his own work. Because his matter and his spirit, his realism and his idealism are so vital, one feels the shock of their meeting, one is shaken with them. He has dared to sing that final audacity which is also the final wisdom: and in his marriage of Time and Eternity, of Earth and Heaven, he stands revealed as apostle as well as artist. That is why Paul Claudel must be reckoned with as one of the indubitable leaders of the Christian reaction so hearteningly and so heroically at work in our contemporary literature.

THE END

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